Zoroastrianism
An Ethnic Perspective

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Dedicated to my wonderful mentor Mary Boyce,*
whose wisdom, guidance and inspiration have enabled me
to write this book.

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Foreword

There are many diverse opinions and interpretations of the Zoroastrian tradition, however, it is appropriate that at this juncture a book titled “Zoroastrianism: An Ethnic Perspective” by Khojeste Mistree has been published in the hope that this book will quench the religious thirst of Zoroastrians, both living in India as well as those beyond the seas. The author has eminently succeeded in giving a faithful presentation of Zoroastrian doctrine and rituals, supported substantially by scriptural evidences; more so in view of the fact that there are a number of other self-styled scholars whose credibility as students of this ancient revealed religion remains a matter of doubt.

Currently, there are some ignorant preachers who often take their views from alien philosophies that are propagated by unenlightened Gurus, and then serve these eclectic ideas to their meek gullible flock with hypocritical devotion. Refreshingly, the present author does not fall into this category, as he has drawn from the authoritative and learned works of Professor Mary Boyce as well as a number of other serious scholars, thereby enhancing the scholarship and value of this book. The importance of this work lies in the fact that the author has highlighted the beauty and strength of Zoroastrian doctrine and rituals from a new ethnic point of view. In doing so, he has succeeded in remaining faithful to the traditions of the Avestan scriptures and their Pahlavi translations and commentaries.

Members of the community should learn to guard against the “mediocre muddle” of books as well as the false teachers of the religion, by turning to scholarship in order that they may not be beguiled into supporting alien doctrine extrapolated from heterogeneous sources in a haphazard manner. It is hoped that the intelligentsia of the community will strive to imbibe Zoroastrianism from this valuable monograph in order to mould their lives as the followers of the “good religion”.

On a personal note, I would like to wish Khojeste, and his wife Firoza who is also deeply involved in the work, brilliant success in all their religious endeavours and writings. May you both be blessed by Ahura Mazda and be given the strength and moral fortitude to bear the buffettings of misguided critics with equanimity.

Dasturji Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal
High Priest
H. B. Wadia Ātash Bahrām
Bombay.
The Genesis of this Book

The seed for this book was sown in London nearly fourteen years ago when two very special English friends of mine, Patricia Buckle and Warren Kenton, began to ask me poignant questions about my religion and heritage. I soon realized that I was unable to answer their probing queries satisfactorily and thus started my own search for a religious identity, which hitherto had remained dormant. Gradually over the months it dawned upon me that without an indepth serious study of the faith, I was not going to be in a position to seek answers to my nascent religious quest.

The search began with the contacts that I made at grass root level in the remote villages of my distant ancestors in Iran. It was during these visits that I met special Zoroastrians who put me in touch with the traditional source of the religion. The experience of these meetings was very rewarding and deeply moving, for I felt the need to delve deeper into the religious writings and literature of my people. What happened during those formative years of religious discovery is part of history. However, without the guidance, enthusiasm and support of Patricia and Warren, I would never have been channelled into the field of Zoroastrian Studies and therefore it is to both of them that I proffer my innermost “rediscovy thanks”.

I would also like to proffer my heartfelt thanks to:

Mr. Dinshah Malegamwala who was instrumental in overcoming a number of hurdles and obstacles in order to help me embark upon my studies at Oxford;

Mehrabarn Zartoshty and Tehemton Aresh, my two chief Iranian sponsors, without whose encouragement and unconditional support I would not have been able to complete my studies at Oxford;

Elizabeth Bonbright of the Marsden Foundation, New York, who took special interest in my work and supported me during my stay at Oxford;

James Russell and Alan Williams, my two great friends and colleagues, who have been sources of inspiration in helping me to formulate an intellectual appreciation of Zoroastrian doctrine which we all studied together.

It is thanks to visionaries like these, that religious scholarship has continued within our community, allowing the flame of Zarathushtra to be rekindled and transmitted from generation to generation.

Upon returning to India in the summer of 1977, I was encouraged by Freddie and Katy Mehta to take small private study groups in which a number of young Zoroastrians fired a volley of questions of a social and religious nature. The interest shown by the younger generation gained momentum and as an outcome of this interest and enthusiasm emerged Zoroastrian Studies (ZS), a movement which is primarily concerned with both the religious as well as the socio-economic aspects of the community. The main aim of ZS is to encourage, promote and support an awareness of the Zoroastrian tradition and Iranian culture through the right use of scholarship and teaching methods, in order to initiate a spiritual and material renaissance for those who seek it. Over the past four years, Zoroastrian Studies has brought together a number of like-minded Zoroastrians whose quest for a religious discovery has begun.
This book has been written in an attempt to satiate the demand for religious knowledge amongst those on the path of a Zoroastrian re-awakening. It is my belief that this book will go a long way in answering a number of complex questions about the "good religion", which have hitherto remained unanswered in the minds of many educated and thinking Zoroastrians. It is not my intention to provoke unbridled controversies, nor is it my desire to offend the religious sentiments of fellow Zoroastrians, and therefore I have taken due care in attempting to present a balanced overall perspective from a traditional and textual point of view.

The contents of this book have been extrapolated from a series of lectures which were delivered by me at a number of seminars held in Bombay, during which specially prepared handouts were distributed to the course participants as an aid to facilitate a quick study of the religion from an ethnic point of view. Each chapter therefore has been compiled succinctly in order to highlight the salient features of the topics covered during the seminars. It is also hoped that in a progressively secular world, this book will be of use even to non-Zoroastrian university students whose interest in Zoroastrianism may be either in the field of comparative religion, or in the study of the "living faith" as practised by the Parsis and many Irans in different parts of the world.

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the strength, tacit support and encouragement given to me by my mother Nergesh, who in spite of criticism levied against her has allowed me to develop my interest in the field of religious studies; and to my wife Firoza, who has devoted endless hours of her time in the additional spadework, research and indeed in the writing of the manuscript. For personal reasons she does not want the kudos of co-authorship inspite of the fact that this book is the result of a sustained joint effort on both our parts.

In particular, I would like to thank Dasturji Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal for writing the foreword as well as for spending numerous hours of his invaluable time with me over the past four years. It is through a series of long discussions with Dasturji that I have been able to grasp some of the subtleties and beauty of the Zoroastrian rituals, which in turn has led to a furtherance of my religious quest.

It is hoped therefore that this book which has evolved through the aspirations and efforts of a number of people will generate a deeper interest in, and a greater awareness of the religion so that every Zoroastrian may once again proudly declare:

"Mazdayasno ahni, Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish".

I am a worshipper of Mazdā, I am a Zoroastrian worshipper of Mazdā.

Khojeste P. Mistree
Signs and Abbreviations

Due to typographical restrictions, the following Avestan letters have been transcribed as below:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{a} &= \ddot{\text{a}} \\
\text{e} &= \ddot{\text{a}} \\
\text{e} &= \ddot{\text{e}} \\
\text{g} &= \ddot{\text{n}}
\end{align*} \]

Ardashir Naqsh AWN
Atash Nyaksh A.-Ny.
Daboesian-e-dingh Dd.
Dinkard, ed. by P. B. and D. P. Sanjana Dk.
Dinkard, etc. Midjan DkM.
The Greater (Iranian) Baktishn Gbd.
The Indian Baktishn In. Bd.
Mando-i-Ehred MKh.
Nasish Ny.
The Persian Baktish SBE
The Sacred Books of the East SBE
Sukker Baktish Shra.
Shayest-ne-shayest Shra.
Shkand-guminig Visar SkgV.
Vendidad Yd.
Yashni Yn.
Yasna Y.
Yathā Ahu Vairō YAV
Zand-i-Vahman Yashni ZVYI.

NOTES

1. Many of the illustrations bear no direct relationship to the chapters in which they appear. The illustrations, however, have been chosen on their artistic and historical merit.

2. The Roman transliterations of the daily prayers (Chapter 17) have been taken from the Khordeh Avesta published by J. B. Karani, Bombay.
General Introduction

Who is a Prophet?
A prophet is a man who receives a revelation from God.

The Nature of Revelation
A revelation forms the basis of a divinely ordained infrastructure which encompasses within its form the objective principles of life. These principles lead man to an awareness of truth, justice and moral purpose which when realized re-links man to his Maker in the physical, psychological and spiritual worlds. The corpus of the revelation forms the basis of a new conceptual framework, which when accepted and practised by a group of people becomes a new religion.

What is Religion?
Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices which help man to relate to the ultimate conditions of his existence. These beliefs and practices when comprehended and experienced give man the tools to understand himself. As a result of this, an insight may be gained of the role that this “self” plays in the cosmos.

The Need for Religion
Religion helps in bringing together a group of people to form a distinguishable faith and community by giving them an identity of purpose. A religious system helps to express, codify and reaffirm the central values of a group of people in such a way, so as to maintain the devotional as well as the ethical fabric of that society.
The Proto-Indo-Iranians

Indo-European Genealogy

Race
Human beings are differentiated by race and language. "A race is made up of a group of people resembling each other in certain inherited characteristics which distinguish them from other groups." 1

In remote times, both the Iranians and the Indians were part of the same tribe and were identified as the Proto-Indo-Iranians, who in turn belonged to the Indo-European family of nations.

The Time and Place

Fourth Millennium B.C.
During this period, the Proto-Indo-Iranians who were nomadic pastoralists wandered and settled on the South Russian Steppes, between the river Volga and the boundaries of Kazakhstan.

Third Millennium B.C.
It is believed that early in the third millennium B.C., the Proto-Indo-Iranians drifted apart and later came to be identified as two distinct peoples, the Iranians and the Vedic Aryans.

PROTO-INDO-IRANIANS (PII)
(4th Millennium B.C.)

SOUTH RUSSIAN STEPPES
3rd Millennium B.C.

One Group
Southwards across

Other Group
Southwards across

KAZAKHSTAN

TURKMENSTAN UZBEKSTAN
Southwestwards towards the

IRANIAN PLATEAU
(Circa 1200 B.C.)

KHIRGIZSTAN TADZHIKSTAN
South and Southeastwards towards the

INDUS VALLEY
(Circa 1500 B.C.)

(Refer to Map)
The Language and Literature

Their Language
Unknown by name, however considered by philologists to be the source of Avestan and Sanskrit.

Oral Tradition
The Proto-Indo-Iranians were the bearers of an oral tradition, as there was no reading or writing system in ancient times.

Their Literature
There seem to have been three types of literature orally transmitted. The Proto-Indo-Iranians are said to have had a strong tradition of—
1. Heroic poetry
2. Lyric and elegiac poetry
3. Religious and learned poetry.

The General Religious Beliefs

Their Religion
Unknown by name, but certainly included the worship and propitiation of a number of gods and goddesses. The Indo-Iranian pantheon included a number of nature divinities who were deemed to be sometimes good and on other occasions wicked.

The Proto-Indo-Iranians worshipped instinctively and often through fear, and hence excessive sacrifices and offerings were made to the different divinities to appease them. The Proto-Indo-Iranians being nomadic pastoralists, had no fixed houses of worship. Many of their gods were abstract personifications of the elements. Every force or natural element whose manifestation they could see or experience, was deified.

They did however believe in an all-pervading primitive concept of order (Sk. rta). The regular movements of day and night by the rising and setting of the sun, as also the seasonal changes, made the Proto-Indo-Iranians believe that there was a force or natural law which maintained and regulated these changes. Many centuries later, this natural law came to be known by the Iranian people (in the Avestan language) as asha. The precept of asha was the precursor to the later Zoroastrian concept of truth.

The Pantheon of Indo-Iranian Worship
The three chief Asuras:
Mitra — the Lord of Covenant/Loyalty
Varuna — the Lord of Binding Oath/Truth
Asura — the Lord.

The three Lords jointly were believed to be responsible for the natural order in the world.

The Proto-Indo-Iranians considered a promise and its enforcement as an extension of the natural law (Sk. rta), as it was seen necessary to maintain some kind of basic order in their otherwise turbulent society. Mitra became the Lord of Contract and Varuna became the Overseer of Solemn Oaths. Both these pledges it is believed, contained a latent power which consequently gave Mitra and Varuna divine status.

A System of Ordeals
In the case of a dispute involving a breach of contract or oath, the pledges to Mitra and Varuna were tested by means of a fire or water ordeal, which the accused was made to undergo. If the accused survived the ordeal, the person was deemed to be innocent.

Their Cult Gods
Fire, Water, Haoma (plant/priest) and Gēush Urvan (the soul of the cow) were some of the important cult divinities worshipped by the Proto-Indo-Iranians. The two most popular divinities were Fire and Water. The Fire god was offered dry fuel, incense and animal fat, whereas the Water goddess was propitiated with milk and the sap from the haoma and pomegranate plants. Haoma and Gēush Urvan
were invoked together and offerings of blood sacrifice were made to them.

Their Nature Gods
These were the personifications of certain physical phenomena, and so the Proto-Indo-Iranians worshipped the Sky, Sun, Moon, Stars, Earth and Wind.

The Social Pattern
The Proto-Indo-Iranian society appears to have been a bipartite one, with the priests being a socially distinct class from the rest of the people. Being nomadic pastoralists, their wealth was seen to be in the cattle, sheep and horses that they herded. They seem to have followed a patrilineal system within their society.

The World View
The Proto-Indo-Iranians believed that the world was created in seven stages. They thought that the sky was a huge stone shell in which water was contained; the earth they believed was a flat disc which floated on the water. Upon the earth they believed grew the first plant, after which appeared a single animal and later, the first man and woman. The last creation was fire, whose source was the sun which stood still at noon, as they thought the world to be initially motionless.

The Proto-Indo-Iranians strongly believed that their gods offered the first triple divine sacrifice of a plant, animal and man, after which the cycle of life is traditionally held to have begun.

Sacrifice
The Proto-Indo-Iranians believed that man was beholden to continue the natural process of life and death started by their gods. It was their gods who through a divine sacrifice were able to regenerate life. Hence it became the duty of the priests to re-enact the first sacrifice by offering plants and animals in order to ensure that the continuity of the life cycle was maintained. The act of sacrifice was done in the belief that benefit to man would accrue, both in the seen and unseen worlds, and that the spirit of the creature upon death would merge with the god-head.

The Concept of Death and the Hereafter
Death was looked upon as a natural process in the cycle of life. The Proto-Indo-Iranians strongly believed in an after-life doctrine, according to which they thought that the heroic spirits of the dead lingered upon the earth for three days and then retreated underground into the Kingdom of Shadows which was ruled by Yama. Hence they buried their dead at the bottom of deep shafts covered by earthen burrows.

Unusual Customs
Bull's Urine
The Proto-Indo-Iranians used bull's urine as they believed that it contained divine powers which were held to be of a spiritual and medicinal nature. The bull's urine was also used by them for inner bodily purity as well as outer ritual purity.

The Dog: Man's Best Friend
As nomadic pastoralists, the Proto-Indo-Iranians found the dog to be a trusted loyal companion and a help in their daily lives. They also believed in the spiritual importance of the dog, who was seen to be the living intermediary between the visible and invisible worlds. As a result, they held that the soul of the dog was linked with the soul of man - a concept which entered Zoroastrianism many centuries later.
The Life of Zarathushtra

The Prophet

His Name:
Zarathushtra (Ph. Zaratusht — "he who manages/drives camels").

His Date of Birth:
Circa 1500 B.C. (See Appendix 1)

His Birthplace:
Somewhere around the Aral Sea. (See Appendix 2)

His Family Background:
Zarathushtra was born into the Spitaman family.

Father: Pourushaspa (Ph. Pūrūšasp — "possessing grey horses").

Mother: Dughdōvā (Ph. Dughdōv — "milkmaid").

Brothers: According to the tradition he had four brothers — two elder, Ratushtar and Rangushtar, and two younger, Nodari and Nivedis (Zādspram 15.5).

Zarathushtra's marital status has been a topic of much debate amongst scholars for many generations. There are three differing points of view that have been put forward by them.

No Wife:

Notable amongst the exponents of the "No Wife" theory is Taraporewala, who alludes to Zarathushtra being a Magian and therefore a celibate. In fact he claimed that Pouruchistā's name (which is mentioned in the Gaṅghā, Y.53.3) is merely an abstract attribute and not the name of the prophet's daughter as is generally believed. His interpretation of Zarathushtra's genealogy therefore is an abstract spiritual one.

1. For a detailed critical analysis of the subject, refer to mimeographed paper titled "Conflicting Theories About Zarathushtra's Marital Status", prepared by Zoroastrian Studies, June 1981.

One Wife:

Other scholars hold the more traditional and socially acceptable theory that Zarathushtra had one wife Hvōvī who bore all his children. They however dismiss the prophet's genealogy referred to in the Pahlavi texts as being late, spurious and interpolated.

The Pahlavi Tradition:

The main sources for Zarathushtra's genealogy come to us from the Dēnkard, Bundahishn and Zādspram in which it is believed that the transmission of the tradition (Ph. patvand) has been maintained. In the Dēnkard and Bundahishn, there are clear references of Zarathushtra's children being bore by more than one wife.

According to the Pahlavi texts, the first wife was Urvij/Aurvij (Dk. bk. 7, 8.18 Vol. 14 pp 86, 87 fajl). She is said to have borne Zarathushtra one son, Isat. vāstra (Ph. Isadvāstra — "desiring pastures") and three daughters, Perrī (Ph. Perrī — "abundance"), Thritī (Ph. Srītī — "the third one") and Poruchistā (Ph. Pouruchist — "very thoughtful") (In Bd. 32.5-6, SBE Vol. 5 p 142).

The second wife's name is not known for certain. However, in the Dēnkard there is mention of Amīj being the second wife of the prophet (Dk. bk.7, 8.18 Vol.14 p 87 fajl). She is believed to have borne Zarathushtra's two other sons, Urvatnāra (Ph. Urvatnāra — "commanding men") and Hvarechitra (Ph. Khvarshēchāhīr — "sun-faced one") (In Bd. 32.5-6, SBE Vol. 5 p 142 and GBD 35.56 p 301).

Hvōvī (Ph. Hvōvī — "possessing good cattle") who is believed to be the daughter of Frashāoshta Hvōgya (Dk. bk. 9, 68.58 Vol.19 p 66) and the niece of his brother Jāmāsp Hvōgya.

2. According to tradition, Jāmāsp Hvōgya is held to have been the minister and wise counselor to King Vēštasp. Jāmāsp is believed to have married Zarathushtra's youngest daughter Pouruchistā whose mother is said to have been Urvij according to the Dēnkard (Dk. bk. 7, 8.18 p 87(1)) and the Indian Bundahishn (In Bd. 32.5 - 6, SBE Vol. 5 p 142).
(Yr.13.103, SBE Vol.23 p 107), is deemed to be the popularly known wife of the prophet. It is stated in the tradition that three posthumous sons will be conceived from the seed of Zarathushtra and Hvôî, but will be borne by three virgins at thousand-year intervals. They will be called Ukhshyat.ereta (Ph.Ushëdar - "he who makes righteousness grow"), Ukhshyat.nurmah (Ph.Ushëdarmah - "he who makes reverence grow") and Astvat.ereta ("he who embodies righteousness"), the Saoshyant. (In.Bd.32.8, SBE Vol.5 p 144).

The Early Years

His Training

It seems that Zarathushtra was trained as a priest in an older unknown religion. He refers to himself in his own hymns the Gāhās (Y.33.6) as a priest (Av.zaotar - "he who invokes prayers"). He also refers to himself (in Y.48.3) as an initiate (Av.vâxemna - "one who knows"). In the Younger Avesta (Yr.13.94) the term āthravan (priest) is used as his epithet.

His Search

According to tradition, when Zarathushtra was twenty years of age he left his parents' home against their wishes in search of truth (Z̄ad-
spram 20.7).

3. See Ch.8 "The Creation Story", section on The Apocalyptic Tradition.
His Thirtieth Year

During the spring festival Zarathushtra went to fetch water from the river Dāityā for the strength-giving haoma ceremony (Zādspram 21.5). The Holy Immortal, Vohu Manah (the “Good Mind”), appeared before Zarathushtra as a bright, shining being in the form of “...a man, handsome, brilliant and elegant, who wore his hair curve-tailed, because the curved tail is an indication of duality; ...” (Zādspram 21.8).

The Enlightenment

Zarathushtra was taken to the celestial court of the Lord of Wisdom (Av. Ahura Mazda) and the other six Holy Immortals (Av. Amesha Spentas). When he came within twenty-four feet of these deities, it is said that he could not see his own shadow on account of their brilliant light (Zādspram 21.13).

Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda a number of questions:

1. “In the embodied world, which is the first of the perfect ones, which the second and which the third?”

   Ahura Mazda replied thus:
   “The first perfection is good thoughts, the second, good words and the third, good deeds.”

2. “Which thing is good, which better and which is the best of all habits?”

   Ahura Mazda replied thus:
   “The title of the Amesha Spentas is good,
the sight of them is better, and carrying out their commands is the best of all habits.” (Zādspram 21.15–18).

Afterwards Ahura Mazda spoke of the duality of existence in the relative world.
“...Of those spirits, he who was wicked preferred the practice which is iniquitous, and the spirit of righteousness, the propitious (Ohrmazd) prefers righteousness.” (Zādspram 21.19).

Ahura Mazda further spoke thus:
“Neither our thoughts, nor desires, nor words, nor deeds, nor religion, nor spiritual faculties are in accord; he who is loving light, his place is with the luminaries; and he who is loving darkness, is with the dark ones.” (Zādspram 21.20).

The First Disciple in Ten Years

His cousin Maidhyōīmāŋha was the first to give ear to the inspired utterances and teachings of Zarathushtra (Yt. 13.95).

The Royal Patrons

It seems that Zarathushtra won the confidence of Queen Hutaosā who in course of time, it is said, thought, spoke and acted according to the new religion (Yt. 9.26). It was probably through Queen Hutaosā that King Vishtāspa was influenced by the new faith. His conversion seems to have taken place in Zarathushtra’s forty-second year (Zādspram 23.5–7).

Zarathushtra’s Death

According to the Pahlavi tradition, Zarathushtra is believed to have lived for seventy-seven years and forty days. It is said that he was murdered by a Turanian named Bradēs, on Khorsheed rōz Ardībehesh māh (Zādspram 23.9).

4. The death anniversary of Zarathushtra is currently observed on Khorsheed rōz Daē māh due to calendar intercalations.
Appendix 1

The Date of Zarathushtra's Birth

Confusion still persists amongst scholars about the date and place of Zarathushtra's birth. Regrettably, the ancient Iranians were not interested in chronology or history and, as such, scholars have had to piece together all the evidence gleaned from linguistic, archaeological, anthropological and literary sources to suggest a tentative date and place for Zarathushtra's birth.

7000 B.C.: Some Parthian scholars relying upon Greek sources push Zarathushtra's date of birth back to the 7th millennium B.C., not realizing that they are inadvertently ascribing Zarathushtra to a non-Iranian cave-man status devoid of any historical perspective.

700 - 600 B.C.: The other commonly held belief is that the prophet was born circa 7th-6th century B.C., which many western scholars today have rejected owing to recent archaeological findings as well as other information that has come to light.

The error seems to have primarily arisen due to the Middle Persian authors wrongly confusing the birth-date of Zarathushtra with the conquest of Babylon by "Cyrus the Great" in 539 B.C. The Middle Persian authors had gathered from the oral tradition that an important event had occurred 258 years before the end of the era of "Alexander the Accursed" (311 B.C.). This resulted in a wrong dating computation in which they thought that Zarathushtra was born around 569 B.C. (311 + 258). They then deducted another 30 years, which is held to be the age when Zarathushtra received his first revelation, and thus calculated a date of 539 B.C. to mark the birth of the religion.

Burrow has tentatively dated the Fravardin Yashit to be around the 8th or 7th century B.C. If his contention is accepted, then the Gathas must have been compiled earlier as the style, grammar and syntax of Zarathushtra's hymns are deemed to be much older than the ancient Fravardin Yashit.

Eduljee, in a well-researched article, has given additional compelling reasons to reject the 7th-6th century B.C. date for the prophet's birth.

1800 - 1500 B.C.: Reputed scholars today place Zarathushtra's date of birth between 1800 and 1500 B.C. for the following reasons:

1. It is held that Zarathushtra could not have lived before the downfall of the Proto-Indo-Iranians in the 3rd millennium B.C., as his sacred hymns, the Gathas, are in an ancient Iranian language called Avestan. There is no evidence for the existence of the Avestan language as far back as the 3rd millennium B.C., when the Iranian identity itself was in the making.

We know from linguistic evidence that Avestan and Sanskrit are sister languages, and that the Gathas are held to be comparable in syntax, style and metre to the Rigveda, which scholars today date around 1800 B.C. Give or take a few hundred years for the development of each language, it is reasonable to postulate that the Gathas and the Rigveda are the contemporary works of two groups of people who once shared a common source.

2. Neither could Zarathushtra have lived before 2000 B.C., because we know from archaeological findings that the use of chariots and carts was learnt by the Iranians sometime during the 2nd millennium B.C. From the Gathas it is evident that Zarathushtra knew about the chariot (Y.50.6) and the cart (Y.51.12), both of which he allegorically refers to in his hymns. Hence, it is reasonable to assume

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that the prophet probably must have lived only after the use of the chariot and cart became commonly known to his people (i.e. after the 2nd millennium B.C.).

3. The imagery in the Gāthās is that of the late Stone/early Bronze Age period which developed circa 1500 B.C., when the Iranians living around the Aral Sea discovered copper and tin in that area.

We also know that the Andronovo culture, known for its skill of weapon-making in bronze, had hit the Iranian tribes living north of the Aral Sea sometime around 1500 B.C. The Gāthās reflect a pastoral society which according to recent research, was what the Iranians were in that early epoch.

It is therefore difficult to ascertain Zarathushtra's date of birth accurately. However, from the evidence available a tentative date of around 1500 B.C. may be postulated.

Appendix 2

The Place of Zarathushtra's Birth

Zarathushtra's exact place of birth is factually unknown. Textual references are misleading as some authors place his birth in western Iran (Azerbaijan/Rayy/Shīr), while in other sources an eastern Iranian lineage is suggested.

If we accept Zarathushtra's dating to be around 1500 B.C., then it is reasonable to postulate his place of birth to be in the eastern Iranian homelands (which include the areas north and east of the Caspian Sea), where the people were at the twilight of the Stone Age and the dawn of the Bronze Age. From archaeological evidence we know that one group of Iranians, as late as 1200 B.C., moved westwards onto the plateau which later came to be known as Iran. Western Iran, however, was ahead in cultural development as its inhabitants had begun to use iron due to the influence of the Mesopotamian civilization.

Zarathushtra could not have been part of this milieu as his hymns appear to reflect a Stone/Bronze Age period.

It is also important to bear in mind that Zarathushtra's hymns, the Gāthās, are in an eastern Iranian language which would not have been spoken or understood in western Iran during the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. It is unlikely, therefore, that Zarathushtra could have been born in western Iran.

Finally, the geography of the Avesta can be identified with places stretching across the modern day provinces of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with the river Volga and the Caspian Sea forming the western boundary. If the prophet was born in western Iran, it is reasonable to assume that in the Avesta there would have been some mention of western Iranian place names, which is not the case.

To conclude, there appear to be two likely areas where Zarathushtra may have been born - either north or south of the Aral Sea. The Andronovo culture north of the Aral Sea was sufficiently advanced for the nomadic pastoralists of that region to accept the teachings of Zarathushtra. It is equally possible for Zarathushtra to have been born south of the Aral Sea in the milieu of the Tagar culture which spread in circa 1500 B.C. around an area which later came to be known as Khwarezmia with the river Oxus running through it.

Bronze statuette — Amlash (9th century B.C.)
The Legends of Zarathushtra

Legend: Stranger than Truth

Legends are principles that are woven into stories which physically appear to be impossible. These stories are passed down from generation to generation in a style rich in allegory and symbolism. Legends cannot be historically verifiable, nevertheless they include a number of profound philosophical truths which are conveyed in an enigmatic way.

As there seems to be no chronology for any part of the Avesta, there is no means of knowing how soon after Zarathushtra's death, the legends about his life and times developed.

Zarathushtra's Birth

In the Dēnkarī we are told that upon God's command, the prophet-to-be's khwarr (kingly glory) was brought from the celestial world and made to descend into the hearth of Zarathushtra's maternal grandfather, Frāhīm, rvānā-zōish. From this hearth-fire the kingly glory entered Dughdōvā's mother and later it passed into Dughdōvā herself. As a result of this, Dughdōvā radiated light around her, dispelling the darkness. The demons recognized this divine happening and therefore attempted to kill her. Dughdōvā's father sent her away to the house of the Spītaman family chief whose son, Pourushaspa, eventually married her.

According to the legend the kingly glory also entered Pourushaspa. One day Pourushaspa and his wife drank the juice of the kōm stalk, mixed with milk, whereupon the kingly glory (Av.khwarenah), the guardian spirit (Av.fra-vashi) and the physical body (Av.tanū gaēthya) came together and united in the mother-to-be to form the perfect man-child, under the guidance of the Bounteous Immortals. The demons tried to kill Zarathushtra in the womb of his mother. Dughdōvā, it is believed, was in great pain and anguish as she was attacked by the demons of fever, pain and wind. In desperation, she sought to go to a wizard but was advised not to go by the voice of God.

Instead, God instructed her to wash her hands and then take firewood, butter and meat as offerings to the hearth-fire. Legend has it that this propitiated fire surrounded her to protect her from the demons. (Dk.bk.7 Ch.2, SBE Vol. 47 pp 17-30).

Zarathushtra was thus born in a divine way, for included in his birth were the three components of khvarenah, fraωashi and tanū gaēthya, which according to tradition was his ordination to be the future priest, warrior and herdsman amongst his people (Zādspram 18.2).

His Infancy

According to tradition Zarathushtra is said to have been the only child who laughed when he was born instead of crying. For it is stated, “...those who are made to cry have seen mortality as their end, and those who have laughed have seen their own righteousness.” (Zādspram 14.17).

The demons, it is said, next tried to destroy the infant. According to the Zādspram (16.4-9), Pourushaspa being temporarily afflicted by evil gave his child to a wicked priest (Ph.kurb) who tried to kill the infant Zarathushtra. First, the kurb threw the baby in the path of a herd of cattle and later in the path of horses, but the baby was protected by a divine force and therefore remained unharmed. Zarathushtra was next thrown by the kurb onto a pile of burning embers but once again he remained unscathed. Finally, the kurb carried the infant to the lair of a she-wolf thinking that the animal would kill the baby; however, a divine power intervened and protected the infant Zarathushtra.

His Childhood

Zarathushtra's childhood is replete with stories about his understanding and sagacity. Even as a boy he showed opposition to the cult of the demons whom he recognized to be evil.

A priest of the demons (Ph.dēva) was once a guest in his father's house and was invited to
recite the formal religious prayer (māthra) before food. Zarathushtra objected to this request which angered the priest who cursed Zarathushtra, only to fall dead from his horse as he rode away (Zādspram 19.8).

His Adolescence
At the age of fifteen, Zarathushtra asked his father for his rightful share of a girdle (Ph. küst) which he later tied around his waist. It is said that the good mind (Av. Vohu Manah) instructed him to do that which was righteous and proper (Zādspram 20.1-3).

At the Court of King Vishtāspa
According to the Zardusht Nameh, Zarathushtra was persecuted by the wizards and sorcerers at King Vishtāspa's court. Zarathushtra was wrongly imprisoned by the King because his teachings were not acceptable to the counsellors at the King's court. His release came about when he miraculously cured Vishtāspa's favourite horse.

According to the legend, the prophet cured each limb of the horse, in return for four favours that the King had to concede. First, that Vishtāspa himself should embrace the teachings of Zarathushtra; secondly, that his son Isfandiyār (Spenčāta) should champion and support the faith; thirdly, that Queen Hutaost should also be converted; and fourthly, that the King should put to death Zarathushtra's traducers. Upon the granting of these favours by the King, the horse is believed to have leapt back to its feet, fully cured!

Zarathushtra's Posthumous Sons
It is believed that Zarathushtra will have three sons born posthumously at intervals of a thousand years. His last son will be the Saoshyant who, it is said, will appear fifty-seven years before the final renovation of the world. Evil, at that point, will finally be defeated and the world will once again be restored to a perfect harmonious state devoid of all evil. (Dk. bk. 7, 9-11, SBE Vol.47 pp 107-118).

Horse's head made in silver in Sasanian times (c. 6th century B.C.)
The Gāthās

The fountain-head of Zarathushtra’s religion lies in his hymns—the Gāthās, which are reputed to be his own utterances. Divinely inspired and revealed, the Gāthās are in the form of exalted poetry, within which lies a myriad of esoteric truths.

"Poetry often conveys many levels of reality and can touch numerous springs of human understanding, which often philosophical discourses cannot penetrate." The poetry of the Gāthās is profoundly instructive though quite enigmatic, and hence the hymns lend themselves to many different interpretations.

The Gāthās are composed in a richly developed language, intricate in style and syntax, by a man who must undoubtedly have undergone a rigorous priestly training. His passionate utterances seem to have formed the basis of a religious experience leading into a dialogue between himself and his Creator—Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. Zarathushtra thus, was the recipient of a revelation which when accepted by the ancient Iranians, became a religion, making him the first prophet-priest of the oldest revealed religion in the world.

Zarathushtra’s Gāthās are divided into five hymns, within which are incorporated seventeen chapters (Av.Hās). The hymns are not in chronological sequence, but appear to follow a poetic metre according to which they have been arranged.

1. Ahunavaiti Gāthā (Hās 28–34)
2. Ushtvaiti Gāthā (Hās 43–46)
3. Spentamainyu Gāthā (Hās 47–50)
4. Vohukshatru Gāthā (Hā 51)
5. Vahishtoi Gāthā (Hā 53)

The hymns of the prophet have been faithfully preserved and for centuries, have been orally transmitted down in an unchanged form by his followers. The Gāthās were probably first systematically written down as late as the sixth century A.C., when the Avestan alphabet was invented.

The divine outpourings of Zarathushtra show the depth of his vision, his intellectual quest, his spiritual seeking, and above all, his longing to understand the workings of the world from a specific source whom he perceived to be the Lord of Wisdom. For the first time in human history, man was shown a new path—a path leading towards the recognition of the mind, and thereby a better understanding of one's self.

A Thematic Analysis of the Gāthās

Zarathushtra’s God

God Is Wisdom:

"...when I grasped Thee in a vision to be the Father of the good mind, the real Creator of Truth, (and) the Lord of existence in Thy actions." (Y.31.8).

"Yes, I have already realized Thee to be bounteous, O Wise Lord...." (Y.43.9).

"...These things indeed and others I wish to know, O Wise Lord." (Y.44.3).

"...the Lord who is famed to be Wise in His soul...." (Y.45.10).

God Is the First One:

"Yes, although Thou art the First One ....." (Y.31.8).

"... when I saw Thee to be the First One at the creation of the world, ....." (Y.43.5).

God Is Omniscient:

"... Thou, whom no one is able to deceive." (Y.43.6).

"...... the All-viewing Lord is not to be deceived." (Y.45.4).

"... that which the Wise Lord, the Knowing One, told me: ....." (Y.45.3).

1. Dale Bishop in "A Western Response to Zarathushtra".
God Is Eternal:

"Thou who dost guard truth and the good mind for eternity ...." (Y.28.11).

"Then I recognized you, O Mazdā, in (my) thought as being the beginning and the end ...." (Y.31.8).²

God Is the Creator:

"....O Wise Lord, I am helping to discern Thee to be the Creator of everything......" (Y.44.7).

".... Through the good mind the Creator of existence shall promote the true realization ...." (Y.50.11).

God Is Good:

"..... The Wise One is Lord through such actions stemming from good spirit." (Y.45.5).

"..... seen the Wise One in a vision to be Lord of the word and deed stemming from good spirit ...." (Y.45.8).

God Is Mighty:

"..... Grant thou, piety, your rule of the good mind for the glory of the Mighty One." (Y.51.2).

"..... instruct us to the straight paths of the Mighty One ...." (Y.43.3).

God Grows:

"..... Through this spirit, O Wise Lord, Thou art to grow, Thou who, upto now indeed, hast been the same, Lord." (Y.31.7).

God Is Man’s Friend:

"..... Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend ...." (Y.46.2).

God Is Virtuous:

"..... and virtuous like Thee, O Wise Lord." (Y.43.3).

² See Mary Boyce, History of Zoroastrianism, Vol. 1 p.197.

"Yes, I shall (truly) realize Thee to be both brave and virtuous, O Wise Lord. ....." (Y.43.4).

The core of Zarathushtra’s teachings appears to be in his apprehension of a primeval unity in a perfect world created by the One, Supreme, Eternal, All-knowing God of the good creations – Ahura Mazdā the Lord of Wisdom, whom he perceived to be wholly wise, good and just.

Zarathushtra did not see his God as an omnipotent Being, for he declared in his hymns that God must grow, through the cumulative power of man’s good thoughts, words and deeds. This in turn he promised, would strengthen the power of God who at the end of time he proclaimed, would become truly omnipotent when evil would be utterly vanquished by the possessors of truth - the ashavans.

God he extolled, was mighty and the strongest, though never to be feared; for he saw God as an ally and a friend of man. Zarathushtra perceived God to be perfect and ethically excellent, and his greatest triumph seems to have been in revealing to his people, that ".....man can both serve and honour God" through a rational, ethical structure rather than through the process of instinctive worship or blind faith.

Duality

"Yes, there are two fundamental spirits, twins which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action, they are two: the better and the bad .......when these two spirits first came together, they created life and death, and how, at the end, the worst existence shall be for the deceitful, but the best thinking for the truthful person ..... Of these two spirits, the deceitful one chose to bring to realization the worst things. (But) the very bounteous spirit, who is clothed in the hardest stones, chose the truth ......" (Y.30.3 – 5).
"Yes, I shall speak of the two fundamental spirits of existence, of which the bounteous one would have thus spoken to the evil one: 'Neither our thoughts nor teachings nor intentions, neither our preferences nor words, neither our actions nor conceptions nor our souls are in accord.' " (Y.45.2).

The prophet recognized the need for a fundamental dualism in the relative world, reflected through the existential paradoxes observable in life, such as those of light and darkness, truth and falsehood, righteousness and wickedness, order and disorder, life and death. The Bounteous Spirit, he taught, upheld the foremost principle of existence, that which is the life-enhancing, conserving force; whereas the evil spirit, he declared, came into a transient existence in the relative world as the agency of excess and deficiency, which he saw as the deviation from the "golden mean". Evil he thus held, was a corrupt, destructive and life-dissipating force whose defeat he promised, has been master-minded through the wisdom and all-knowingness of God.

The concept of duality in Zoroastrianism therefore, is not one based on mere physical power, nor one that alludes to the worship of two antagonistic spirits, but one that is founded upon the intrinsic contrasting natures of the two opposing forces in the relative world. Thus the role of man in this cosmic struggle, is to assist God in bringing about the final annihilation of evil and the eventual triumph of the forces of good, through the ethical power of cumulative good thoughts, words and deeds.

The Nature of Evil

"...that deceit is to be destroyed for its (false) profession..." (Y.49.3).

"But the deceitful persons, bad in rule, bad in actions and words, bad in conceptions and thoughts,..." (Y.49.11).

"...let that affliction, most mighty with death's bondage, come to these (deceitful), and let it come quickly." (Y.53.8).

"Poison adheres to those of evil preferences. They are decline and darkness, these furious violators of truth whose persons have been condemned...." (Y.53.9).

Zarathushtra clearly recognized a distinct dichotomy between the forces of good and evil in the relative world. In his quest to explain duality, Zarathushtra found it necessary to conceptualize evil as everything abhorrent to the good creations.

Evil, in Zarathushtra's vision, seems to have been the corruption of good, resulting in the imperfection within the relative world. This imperfection he strongly advocated, could not come from Ahura Mazda—a perfect Being, but was in fact the antithesis of all that, which at the point of creation, was intrinsically existent and good.

Choice and Free Will

"Listen with your ears to the best things. Reflect with a clear mind—man by man for himself—upon the two choices of decision, being aware to declare yourself to Him before the great retribution." (Y.30.2).

"...whereby a person with volition, expresses his preferences." (Y.31.11).

"Him who left to our will (to choose between) the virtuous and the unvirtuous...." (Y.45.9).

Man, for the first time in history was introduced to the concepts of choice and free will based upon an objective ethical structure, as outlined in the prophet's hymns.
Zarathushtra taught that the free will to choose is the God-given right of man—a right which man should exercise judiciously within an intellectual framework. Man is thus equipped to discern through volitional consciousness, between the forces of truth and falsehood.

The Ethical Structure

The Bounteous Spirit —

God's Creative and Motivating Force:

"Therefore, Lord, this Zarathushtra chooses that very spirit of Thine which indeed is the most bounteous of all, O Wise Lord ...." (Y.43.16).

"...the Wise Lord, hast come into the world with Thy virtuous spirit ...." (Y.43.6).

The Good Mind/Thinking —

God-given Gift to Man:

"... when I grasped Thee in a vision to be the Father of the good mind, ...." (Y.31.8).

"... Be for us, Wise Lord, the revealer of the good mind." (Y.31.17).

"... Thou didst create the wondrous powers of good thinking allied with truth." (Y.43.2).

"... and also if the force of the good mind shall come to me." (Y.43.4).

"Thou who dost guard truth and the good mind for eternity ...." (Y.28.11).

The Best Truth —

Certain to Prevail:

"... knowing, as he does, the creator and companion of truth,..." (Y.34.10).

"... those rewards Thou shalt give, through the heat of Thy truth-strong fire ...." (Y.43.4).

"...... those attainments befitting truth through which one might set Thy supporters in happiness." (Y.28.2).

"However, it has been fated for this world, O Wise Lord, that the truth is to be saved for its (good) preference, ...." (Y.49.3).

The Desirable/Sovereign Kingdom —

The Dominion of God:

"... I shall seek for myself their rule of strength, through whose growth we might conquer deceit." (Y.31.4).

"But to this world He came with the rule of good thinking and of truth ...." (Y.30.7).

"... He serves truth, during his rule, with good word and good action ...." (Y.31.22).

"... By your rule, O Lord, Thou shalt truly heal this world in accord with our wish." (Y.34.15).

Holy Piety/Devotion —

The Love for God:

"... And His daughter is piety of good actions ...." (Y.45.4).

"Virtuous is the man of piety ...." (Y.51.21).

"... May there be piety under the rule of Him who has the appearance of the sun ...." (Y.43.16).

"... The Wise One in rule is Lord through piety ...." (Y.47.1).

Perfection/Completeness —

The Goal of Man:

"... who shall tell me the real precept concerning the truth of His completeness and immortality: ...." (Y.31.6).

"Yes, both perfection and immortality are for Thy sustenance ...." (Y.34.11).

Immortality/Undyingness —

An Unending Beginning:

"... Thou didst receive for Thyself immortality, truth, and mastery over completeness, ...." (Y.34.1).
"...by reason of Thy most bounteous spirit, grant Thou to me immortality and perfection..." (Y.51.7).

Man's unique spiritual quest is bound up with the recognition, reverence and affirmation of the essence of God together with God's good mind, His truth, His power, His piety, His perfection and His immortality - qualities which in Zarathushtra's teachings, later came to be identified as the attributes of the Bounteous Immortals - the Amesha Spentas. Through these seven divinities, Zarathushtra brilliantly wove together the abstract and the concrete, linking them to the ultimate goal in his vision, which was of creating a harmonious perfect state in both the seen and unseen worlds.

The Hereafter

The Judgement: Life Continues ....

"...with all these I shall cross over the Bridge of the Separator." (Y.46.10).

Heaven - The Reward,

Hell - The Retribution:

"Heavenliness shall be the future possession of him who shall come to a truthful person (now). (But) a long lifetime of darkness, foul food, the word woe - to such an existence shall your conception, along with its (corresponding) actions, lead you, ye deceitful ones." (Y.31.20).

"I shall always obey (you), the truly sincere ones existing in the House of Song." (Y.50.4).

"...But their own soul and their own conception did vex them when they reached the Bridge of the Judge, (there) to become guests in the House of Deceit." (Y.46.11).

"...just as He shall be the first (to do so) during the requitals with the (molten) iron." (Y.30.7).

The Saoshyants:

"Yes, those men shall be the saviours of the land, namely, those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching...." (Y.48.12).

The Making Wonderful:

"...to have their prizes, namely, bad for the bad, a good reward for the good, (each to be given) through Thy skill at the final turning point of creation." (Y.43.5).

Upon death, which in Zoroastrianism is seen as a temporary triumph of evil, the soul is judged at the Bridge of the Separator where it receives its reward or punishment. If found righteous, the soul ascends to the House of Song (Heaven), while if wicked, it descends as a guest to the House of Deceit (Hell). The latter state however is a temporary one, for at the end of time the imperfect soul will become cleansed, and will join the blessed. There is a promise then, that the Saoshyants will appear, to complete the triumph of good, when evil it is believed will be utterly vanquished, and Ahura Mazda - the Infinite One will triumphantly become fully omnipotent in Endless Light!

Subsequently, the general Last Judgement of all the souls awaiting redemption will take place, followed by the resurrection of the physical body, which will once again meet its spiritual counterparts, the soul and the spirit. Time will cease to be, upon "the accomplishment of the Making Wonderful" and all the seven creations of Ahura Mazda will be gathered together in eternal blessedness and perfection, reflecting a unity within a harmonious multiplicity, in both the seen and unseen worlds.

Zarathushtra: A Man with a Vision

The Reverence:

"With hands outstretched in reverence...I first entreat all (of you), O Wise Lord, ....." (Y.28.1).

The Quest:

"I who shall serve all of you, O Wise Lord, with good thinking, to me are to be granted
the attainments of both existences – yes, of matter as well as of mind – those attainments befitting truth through which one might set Thy supporters in happiness.” (Y.28.2).

The Mind — A Giant Leap Forward:

“Truth, shall I see thee, as I continue to acquire both the good mind and the way to the Lord? … as long as I shall be able and be strong, so long shall I look in quest of truth … Thou didst create the wondrous powers of the good mind allied with truth.” (Y.28.4 – 5, Y.43.2).

His Doubts:

“Have ye the mastery, have ye the power, O Wise Lord, for the act to protect your needy dependent – as I indeed am?…” (Y.34.5).

His Struggle:

“Yes, throughout my lifetime I have been condemned as the greatest defiler, I, who try to satisfy the poorly protected (creatures) with truth, O Wise Lord ….” (Y.49.1).

Revelation – The Dialogue:

“This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord. Which man in the beginning was the father of truth during the creation? Which man did fix the course of the sun and of the stars? … Through whom does dawn exist, along with midday and evening, (all of) which remind the worshipper of his purpose? … Which man, O Wise Lord, is the creator of the good mind? …? By these (questions), O Wise Lord, I am helping to discern Thee to be the Creator of everything…. (Y.44.3 – 5, 7).

His Frustration:

“To what land to flee? Where shall I go to flee? They exclude (me) from my family and from my clan. The community with which I have associated has not satisfied me, nor those who are the deceitful rulers of the land. How, then, shall I satisfy Thee, O Wise Lord? … I know that (reason) because of which I am powerless, O Wise Lord: by my condition of having few cattle, as well as (that) I am a person with few men. I lament to Thee. Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend. Let me see the power of the good mind allied with truth!” (Y.46.1 – 2).

The Search Continues:

“This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, O Lord, … Who is truthful or who is deceitful? Is this one evil or is that one evil? … How shall we repel deceit away from us and onto those who….. do not pursue truth’s care and company, …? How might I deliver deceit into the hands of truth, in order to destroy it in accord with the precepts of Thy teaching…. How shall I, with your accord, impassion your following, so that my voice might be powerful (enough) …? (Y.44.12 – 14, 17).

His Triumph:

“Through his rulership (following) along the paths of good thinking, Kavi Vishtåsa reached this understanding of our task, which he respected in harmony with truth…. This prize has been promised to you during the times of salvation by reason of your good mind and truth, …O Wise Lord, grant to me Thy support.” (Y.51.15 – 16, 18).

Nearly three and a half thousand years later, the prophet’s hymns still ring true in the hearts and minds of his followers, communicating to them the depth and intensity of his spiritual quest. The reward for man, Zarathushtra promised, is eternal blessedness if one consciously chooses to be the soldier of truth in thought, word and deed – a revelation truly stupendous for all mankind to follow!

(All the above translations, with minor alterations, have been taken from The Gāthās of Zarathushtra, translated by Stanley Inslar, Acta Iranica Series, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1975).
Ahura Mazda’s Task Force

Zoroastrian doctrine is based upon a hierarchical order of a heptad of principal divinities who later collectively came to be known as the Bounteous Immortals (Av. Amesha Spentas, Ph. Amähraspandas). The adjective Spenta means “possessing power”, perhaps even supernatural power, and hence different shades of meaning have been extrapolated from this word which in translation may mean bounteous, incremental or holy. The noun amesha in translation means an “undying being” and hence, immortal. The collective term Amesha Spenta is not to be found in the Gāthas but first appears in Yasnā Hāuptanghāiti (Y.39.3), a post-Gāthic compilation with many pre-Zoroastrian ideas contained within it.

The Amesha Spentas fulfill a dual role. They form the kernel of the ethical infrastructure of the religion, as well as they are the guardians and protectors of the seven good creations which are the sky, waters, earth, plants, cattle, man and fire.

The task of a Zoroastrian is to imbibe the attributes of the seven Amesha Spentas in order that one may consciously integrate into one’s life each quality of Ahura Mazda, as represented through each of His seven Bounteous Immortals. Every man requires the Wisdom and the Spirit of God (Spenta Mainyu) in order to be aware of the Good Mind (Yohu Manah). The Good Mind is God’s greatest gift to man, for it is from the Good Mind that man learns to develop a perception of the Best Truth (Asha Vahishta). The physical concept of truth is order, which is to be found primarily in the structure and workings of the universe. The recognition of this order comes about when man learns to cherish the truth for its own sake. A combination of God’s Wisdom balanced by the Good Mind and the Best Truth, gives man the strength or the Sovereign Kingdom (Khshathra Vairya) to implement the will and goodness of God in this world. Man however must learn to accept this will through Piety and Devotion (Armaiti), in order that he may experience an inexplicable moment of cosmic harmony. The experience of this harmony lies in the Perfection (Haurvatat) of whatever one does. Every thought, word and deed must be created to bring fruition the final goal of creation, which is the defeat of evil, resulting in the state of undyingness (Ameraat).

The duty of man is to realize the nature of this matrix of abstract principles, which when personified take on the role of becoming the guardians of the seven good creations. An awareness of the sensate world enables man to gain an insight into an intangible dimension, which may be likened to the mirrored reality of the corporeal world. Spirituality therefore is an extension of consciousness from the physical to a subtler dimension of reality. This subtler state is not to be seen as being more important than the physical one, which is but a reflection of the Wise Lord’s inherent nature. The true realization that everything good in this world is the affirmation of God, is perhaps the kernel of Zoroastrian spirituality.

Upon following a strict ethical code as well as maintaining a deep reverence for the seven creations, a Zoroastrian begins to gain an insight into the workings of the physical world. Through this insight an awareness of, and a responsibility towards the Wise Lord’s creations begins to emerge, resulting in a Zoroastrian championing the cause of ecology against those who are responsible for the pollution and defilement of all that is natural and good in this world. God’s world must be kept pure and because of the importance of the general well-being of man in this world, a Zoroastrian is encouraged to live life to its fullest, in order that he may learn to preserve and enjoy the goodness of the seven creations.
Monasticism, fasting, celibacy and mortification of the body, are anathema to a Zoroastrian as it is believed that such practices weaken man and thereby lessen his power to fight evil. Similarly, pessimism and despair are sins and in fact are seen as yielding to evil. The task of man is to learn to combat evil with courage, moral fortitude and affirmation.

Hence a Zoroastrian is urged to lead an active, industrious, honest and above all a charitable life. It is through an existential perception of the Bounteous Immortals that a Zoroastrian learns to formulate an ethical policy of "good living". This awareness brings about a gnosis of what is indeed the right thought, the right word and the right deed - the key unquestionably to becoming an *ashavan*, the possessor of truth.
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<td>Represents the power and strength in the Kingdom of God.</td>
<td>The Sky and Metals</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>&quot;...I shall seek for myself their rule of strength, through whose growth we might conquer death...&quot; (Y. 31.4)</td>
<td>Man must learn to exercise strength and power from within his Sovereign Kingdom, so that he may acquire a disposition which he may realize the goodness of his actions which are performed in accordance with proper authority and justice.</td>
<td>4th 8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Spenta Armaiti Pk. Spentarmad</td>
<td>Bounteous Piety/Devotion</td>
<td>Maintains the receptive, beneficent and devotional qualities within the wise Lord's good creations.</td>
<td>The Earth</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>&quot;Virtuous is the man of devotion...&quot; (Y. 51.21)</td>
<td>Man must learn to show devotion by caring for the earth and piety in all that he does, in order that he may become virtuous, sensitive, and just.</td>
<td>5th 12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Haervatát Pk. Hordad</td>
<td>Perfection/ Health/ Completeness.</td>
<td>Reflects the goodness, completeness and perfection of God in the world.</td>
<td>The Waters</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>&quot;Yes, both perfection and immortality are for Thy sustenance...&quot; (Y. 34.11)</td>
<td>Man must strive towards the perfection and completeness of all that lies within our world, in order that evil may be expelled, resulting in the restoration of a perfect state.</td>
<td>6th 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Ameregín Pk. Amurdad</td>
<td>Immortality/ Undyingness</td>
<td>Bestows the triumph of undyingness in order to maintain the well-being and continuity of God's creations.</td>
<td>The Plants</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>&quot;...Your enduring worshipful offering has been established to be immortality and completeness...&quot; (Y. 33.8)</td>
<td>Man must realize the continuity of life in both the corporeal and spiritual worlds, in order that he may work towards the “Making Wonderful” — when the whole of creation will continue in a state of perfect peace and harmony.</td>
<td>7th 5th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A DIAGRAMMATIC PRESENTATION OF THE AMESHA SPENTAS

THE ETHICAL MAN

G. AMERETĀT (Amaradvā) Immortality
4. Plants

HAURVATĀT (Hoardē) Perfection
2. Water

A. SPENTA MAINUYA (Spennāg Meñōga) Holy Spirit
6. Man

Kehvāps (Prototype Image)

B. VOHU MANAH (Vahvam) Good Mind
5. Cattle

C. ASHA VAHISHTA (Ardvahisht) Best order/Truth/Righteousness
7. Fire

Urvan (Soul)

SPENTA ĀRMAITI (SpennAramad) Holy Piety/DevoGion
3. Earth

KHSHATHRA VAIRYA (Shahrawar) Desirable Kingdom
1. Sky

Ushītana (Vital Breath)

Tāmī (Body)

Passive Qualities

Active Qualities

Circumference A · G = Ethical order
Double lines 1 · 7 = Creation order
Broken lines = Inputs to the soul

THE UNETHICAL MAN

ANDAR Disorder/Untruth/Wickedness
7. Pollutes the fire

AKômAN Evil Mind
5. Destroys the animals

AHRIMAN Evil Spirit
6. Destroys man

d. SAVUL Undesirable Kingdom
1. Pollutes the sky

CORRUPTED MAN

c. TAROMAT Impiety
3. Pollutes the earth

b.

f. TARICH Imperfection
2. Sullies the waters

a.

g. ZAIRICH Mortality
4. Destroys the plants

Circumference a · g = Unethical order
Double lines 1 · 7 = Afflicted creations
The Adorable Beings Worthy of Worship

The concept of Yazatas is a unique one in Zoroastrianism, as they are not seen to be individual gods nor are they regarded as the angels of the Zoroastrian pantheon. The Avestan term Yazata means “an adorable being worthy of worship” and therefore included in the pantheon of Yazatas, is Ahura Mazda the Wise Lord as well as the Amesha Spentas who aid Him in the spiritual and physical worlds. The remaining Yazatas form the second tier of deities whose origins often appear to stem from a pre-Zoroastrian background. It seems that Zarathushtra’s reverence for the Yazatas was probably instinctive and inherited for he acknowledges some of the pre-Zoroastrian deities in his hymns, thereby maintaining a continuity with all that was good in the earlier pagan cult.

The Yazatas are anthropomorphized beings who fulfill a dual role. First, they aid the furthering and well-being of the seven good creations and secondly, they help man to realize the inherent nature of God, a nature which encompasses an all-pervading happiness stemming from Wisdom.

A separate identity of the Yazatas has been maintained because of the individual hymns of praise (Av. Yashts) which have been dedicated to them. These hymns of praise are not used for any inner liturgical worship, but they are recited by individuals as a gesture of praise and thanksgiving to the Yazatas. According to the Khorshed Yasht (Y.6.1) there are hundreds of Yazatas in the universe; however in Yasna 16.3-4, it is stated that there are only thirty Yazatas including the seven Amesha Spentas.

Each day (except Fravardin) of the Zoroastrian calendar month is dedicated to an individual Yazata, with Ohrmazd being propitiated on four days—Ohrmazd, Daē pa Ādur, Daē pa Mihr, Daē pa Dēn.1

The Yazatas are also believed to be the givers of boons when invoked by man, who it is said should propitiate them with libations of milk and haoma together with offerings of drōn (flat bread) and meat. They are deemed to be beneficent, full of glory and the possessors of healing power (Ny.3.11) as well as they comprise the entire task force of Ahura Mazda’s good creations. It is believed that they cumulatively enhance the strength and power of mankind in the battle against the forces of evil. The first seven Yazatas, who also form the heptad of Amesha Spentas, are assisted by a team of co-workers (Ph. humkārs).

Ohrmazd is assisted by........ Daē pa Adur
Daē pa Mihr
Daē pa Dēn

Vahman is assisted by........ Māh (Mohor)
Gōsh
Rām

Ardvahisht is assisted by........ Ādur
Srōsh
Vahrām

Shahrawar is assisted by........ Khorshed
Mihr
Asmān
Anērān

Spendārmad is assisted by........ Ardvāsūr
Dēn
Ashī
Mahāspand

Hordād is assisted by........... Teshtar
Fravardinī
Wād (Gōvād)

Amurdād is assisted by........... Rashā
Ashtād
Zamīyād

Each Yazata has a short and a long blessing (Av. Khshnūman) dedicated to it (Sirozah 1.6, SBE Vol.23 pp 3-20) which when invoked by man, brings to life a rich qualitative diversity woven together in an integrated cosmic whole, both created and continuously maintained by the pantheon of Yazatas.

1. As a result of this, Apan Napat, Hasma and Dahman who are also Yazatas have no days dedicated in their honour.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YAZATA</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>GUARDIAN/PROTECTOR</th>
<th>ROLE &amp; FUNCTION</th>
<th>ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>REFERENCES</th>
<th>YASHT</th>
<th>CONNECTED WITH</th>
<th>MALE/FEMALE</th>
<th>INDO-IR.</th>
<th>DEDICATION DAY/MONTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Av. Anār</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Of the dwellings of men</td>
<td>Grants well-being, knowledge, valor, abundance and good memory.</td>
<td>Most beautiful, beneficent, warrior of renowned name, full of glory and healing, the greatest, worthy of sacrifice and worthy of prayer.</td>
<td>&quot;Give me O Fire, son of Ahura Mazda! Lively welfare, lively living, fulness of life, knowledge, sagacity and a good memory.&quot; (Yr.3.10)</td>
<td>Anār</td>
<td>Nyātiḥ 5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>9th/9th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Ādēr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Ardvištē</td>
<td>Fertile, powerful, spotless</td>
<td>Of the waters</td>
<td>Grants wisdom, knowledge and power to animate the adversaries; giver of health and wealth to all, and easy childbirth to women.</td>
<td>Beautiful, courageous, strong, of noble origin and most excellent.</td>
<td>&quot;...who makes all females bring forth in safety...&quot; (Yr.5.3)</td>
<td>Ardvištē</td>
<td>Yāntār 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>10th/8th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Ardvīštē</td>
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<td>Per. Āhān</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Hvar</td>
<td>Radiant sun</td>
<td>Of the universe</td>
<td>Routes the floods of uselessness, impurity, disease, darkness and death; giver of Light.</td>
<td>Imperishable, radiant, cleansing and purifying.</td>
<td>&quot;...we reverence unto the undying, shining, self-luminous Sun...&quot; (Yr.6.1)</td>
<td>Hvar</td>
<td>Yāntār 6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>11th/—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Khoshūd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Māh</td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Of the seed of the bull</td>
<td>Gives warmth, wisdom, thoughtfulness, and prosperity.</td>
<td>Liberal, bright, glorious, strong and vigorous.</td>
<td>&quot;...Hail to the Moon that keeps in it the seed of the Bull!&quot; (Yr.7.1)</td>
<td>Māh</td>
<td>Yāntār 7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>12th/—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Māh</td>
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<td>Čaq. Motohr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Tarōtā</td>
<td>Star/Sirius</td>
<td>Of the rains</td>
<td>Giver of rains, fertility to the fields, vanquishes drought and the wicked ones.</td>
<td>Radiant, glorious and shining.</td>
<td>&quot;We worship the wealthy glorious star Tishtira (who is) beautiful, elevated, mighty, far-seen and the water-seed...&quot; (Yr.8.4)</td>
<td>Šātēr</td>
<td>Yāntār 8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>13th/4th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Šētuhr</td>
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<td>Per. Tīr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Gōšh</td>
<td>Cow</td>
<td>Of cattle</td>
<td>Bestower of health upon cattle, watches from afar, gives welfare and friendship.</td>
<td>Herculean, righteous, nourishing and courageous.</td>
<td>&quot;We worship unto the powerful Draupānī...who keeps the flocks and herds in health, who watches from afar and gives long-continued friendship.&quot; (Yr.9.1)</td>
<td>Gōšh</td>
<td>Yāntār 9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>14th/—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Gōsh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Mīhrah</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>Of the pastures, truth, the light and of all creatures.</td>
<td>Listens to appeals, causes waters to flow, rules over districts and supervises contracts.</td>
<td>Strongest, most sturdy, most active, swift, most victorious, full of knowledge, ever-watchful and sleepless; merciful and a warrior with sharp spears.</td>
<td>&quot;...Mithra, the Lord of wide pastures and watche for the man to whom he comes to help with all the strength of his soul...the powerful, all-knowing, undeceivable Yazata.&quot; (Yr.10.46)</td>
<td>Mīhrah</td>
<td>Yāntār 10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Indo-Iranian</td>
<td>16th/7th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Mīhr</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. In the Gōsh Yāntār, Dravānpī is propitiated.
## A Tabular Presentation of the Important Yazatas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yazata</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Guardian/Protector</th>
<th>Role &amp; Function</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Connected With Yashit</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Indo-Iranian</th>
<th>Dedication Day/Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Av. Srosh Ph. Srōsh</td>
<td>Obedience</td>
<td>Of prayer and of man</td>
<td>Judges the soul at the Bridge of the Separator, smiles the demon; is the teacher of religion.</td>
<td>Strongest, swiftest, awe-inspiring, inconquerable.</td>
<td>“The holy, strong Srosh, who is the incorrupt Word, a mightily-spared and holy Yazata...” (Yz.11.1)</td>
<td>Srōsh Yashit 11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>17th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Rashnu Ph. Rāshnu</td>
<td>Judging, one who judges</td>
<td>Of truth</td>
<td>Chief celestial judge at ordal’s.</td>
<td>Most upright, most holy, most well-shaped, most discerning, the most fore-knowing and the most far-seeing.</td>
<td>“O most true Rashnu! Most benevolent Rashnu! Most fore-knowing, Rashnu, the best door of justice...” (Yz.12.7)</td>
<td>Rashnu Yashit 12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>18th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Verethraghna Ph. Vahram/ Bahrām</td>
<td>Smiting of resistance</td>
<td>Of victory and of travelers</td>
<td>Helps armies to win in battle, brings defeat to the enemy and bestows victory in everything.</td>
<td>Best armed, most courageous, most glorious, most healing, most abounding with favours, most fortunate and is Ahura-created.</td>
<td>(and Verethraghna said to Zarathushtra-) “I am the strongest in strength; I am the most victorious in victory; I am the most glorious in glory;...I am the best giver of welfare; I am the best-healing in health-giving.” (Yz.14.3)</td>
<td>Vahrām Yashit 14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Indo-Iranian</td>
<td>20th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Ramin Ph. Rāmīn</td>
<td>Joy and peace</td>
<td>Of the good pastures</td>
<td>Giver of joy, guides, the soul of the righteous in paradise, giver of fertile fields and thick foliage; giver of peace and security.</td>
<td>Peaceful, bright, glorious and swift.</td>
<td>“...I bless the worship and invocation unto, and the strength and vigour of Ramin and Vahram...” (Yz.15.59)</td>
<td>Rāmī Yashit 15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>21st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Vātī Ph. Vād (Gōwād)</td>
<td>The Good Wind</td>
<td>Of the breath of life</td>
<td>Giver of life; conquers all.</td>
<td>Most swift, strong, mighty with golden armour, who conquers at a blow; all-conquering.</td>
<td>“...My name is the Overtaker, because I can overtake the creatures of both worlds, the one that the Good Spirit has made and the one that the Evil Spirit has made.” (Yz.15.43)</td>
<td>Vādī Yashit 15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Indo-Iranian</td>
<td>22nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Daēnā Ph. Dēnī</td>
<td>Conscience; religion</td>
<td>Of the cow; of Mazda; of man.</td>
<td>Acts as the moral guide and leads the soul to the Bridge of the Separator.</td>
<td>Fair, sweet-scented, beautiful and recognizer of truth.</td>
<td>“So divine is the cow that he shall destroy for himself the assurance of the straight path...at the Bridge of the Separator because of his deeds and because of having turned aside from the path of truth by reason of his own actions (and the words of his tongue).” (Yz.51.13)</td>
<td>Dēnī Yashit 16</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>24th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Ashī Ph. Ard</td>
<td>Things attained; wealth</td>
<td>Of fortune, wealth, fertility and prosperity.</td>
<td>Fills the barns of men with grain and cattle, and coffers with gold; bestowed her bounty on worshippers and also bestowed the khvarnekh (divine grace).</td>
<td>Great, gifted, treasure-laden, shining with joy.</td>
<td>“We worship Ashī the good, who is shining, high, tall-formed; welfare-giving, healing...and powerful.” (Yz.17.1)</td>
<td>Ashī Yashit 17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indo-Iranian</td>
<td>25th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAZATA</td>
<td>MEANING</td>
<td>GUARDIAN/PROTECTOR</td>
<td>ROLE &amp; FUNCTION</td>
<td>ATTRIBUTES</td>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>YASHT</td>
<td>CONNECTED WITH</td>
<td>MALE/FEMALE</td>
<td>INDO-IR. BR.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Arzâš</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Of truth</td>
<td>Represents the judicial aspect.</td>
<td>World increaser, world protector and truthful.</td>
<td>&quot;I made the Arzan Glory, rich in food, rich in wealth...and to withstand enemies.&quot; (Y.28)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Amurdâd Mîhr, Raßh Sîrîh Khwârī</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Aššîlîd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Asman</td>
<td>Stones</td>
<td>Of the sky</td>
<td>Contains the other six creations.</td>
<td>Of hardest stone</td>
<td>&quot;I utter and complete (my yasna) ...you heavens, to the holy wind, to the stars, moon, sun and to Endless Light.&quot; (Y.1.16)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shâhêwî Harî</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Ašmân</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Zam</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Of the earth</td>
<td>Nurtures, nourishes and makes plentiful.</td>
<td>Receptive, nourishing, bounteous, and fertile.</td>
<td>&quot;...Which man has upheld the earth below and the heavens (above) ...&quot; (Y.44.4)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Spandâmâd Mûhr Sîrîh Khwârī</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
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<td>Ph. Zamîyâd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Mîhrâb Spenta</td>
<td>Bounteous, sacred word</td>
<td>Of formalized utterances</td>
<td>Wars off evil; exorcises those possessed by demons; gives succour and help to man.</td>
<td>Most healing, most efficacious, most smiling, greatest and best of spells, has magical charms.</td>
<td>&quot;No one at all who belongs to the deceitful (faction) has listened to your words and instructions.&quot; (Y.31.18)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sîrîh Spandâmâd</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
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<td>Ph. Maḥraspand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Anaghro Karōba</td>
<td>Endless Light</td>
<td>Of the House of Ahura Mazda</td>
<td>Invoked at sacrifice, repels darkness.</td>
<td>Sovereign, powerful, and the possessor of cosmic light.</td>
<td>&quot;...we worship unto all the stars, moon, sun and to all the lights without beginning.&quot; (Y.71.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sîrîh Hem Aparâ Nâpat</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
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<td>Ph. Anârîn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Huâmâ</td>
<td>Name of plant and priest</td>
<td>Of the plants and of the animals</td>
<td>Giver of illustrious song; giver of good harvests and fertility; furthereth arable and possesses wisdom.</td>
<td>Revered as a healer and bestower of health, strength and well-being; compassionate to the animals.</td>
<td>&quot;This fortune was granted to him ...and to him a son was born who was Yima the luminous, rich in cattle, most blessed in fortune...&quot; (Y.5.6)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mîhr Sîrîh Anârîn Ārd</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Indo-Iranian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph. Huâmîn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Aparâ Nâpat (Vourunâ)</td>
<td>Offspring of the waters</td>
<td>Of the waters</td>
<td>Distributes the waters on the earth; furthers fortune.</td>
<td>Shining One and swift-horsed.</td>
<td>&quot;We worship unto the son of the waters, the swift-horsed, the tall and shining Lord...&quot; (Y.19.52)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Spandâmâd Mûhr Sîrîh Khwârī</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Indo-Iranian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph. Hûrî</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Av. Châšà</td>
<td>One who instructs and teaches</td>
<td>Of knowledge and religion</td>
<td>Grants clear vision and righteousness of thought, word and deed.</td>
<td>Most upright and holy, having good ways, having good paths.</td>
<td>&quot;We worship unto the most right Châšà made by Mazda and holy... To whom Zarathushtra did sacrifice for righteousness of speech, for righteousness of deed, and for this boon.&quot; (Y.16.11-12)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Göwîd Spandâmâd Mûhr Sîrîh Khwârī</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph. Fârînâdî</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Fûrêndî</td>
<td>Nourishment</td>
<td>Of wealth</td>
<td>Giver of plenty; and activity to man; brings prosperity to the earth.</td>
<td>Most active in thought in word and in deed.</td>
<td>&quot;...behind him went the tall Ashî and Fûrêndî on his light shahîet...&quot; (Y.8.38)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ard Göwî Mûhr Th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indo-Iranian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph. Fûrêndî</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# A Tabular Presentation of the Important Yazatas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yazata</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Guardian/Protector</th>
<th>Role &amp; Function</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Yashth</th>
<th>Connected With</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
<th>Indo-Ir.</th>
<th>Dedication Day</th>
<th>Dedication Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aav Vanaat Ph. Vanaat</td>
<td>Conqueror</td>
<td>Of the “gates” in the mythical mountain in the center of the world, through which the sun passes daily.</td>
<td>Helps to smite the noxious creatures of Asgra Mainyu; giver of strength and victory; revives tyrants and brings peace of mind.</td>
<td>Dispels evil.</td>
<td>“…I will worship unto the star Vanaat, strong, invoked by his own name, healing, in order to withstand the accursed and most feal khraftas (i.e.noxious creatures)...” (Y9.20.1)</td>
<td>Vanant Yashth 20</td>
<td>Tir</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aav. Aryan Malan Ph. Aryan Malan</td>
<td>Fellowship</td>
<td>Of health and the Lord of Friendship</td>
<td>Prevents sickness and disease; will be invoked by the saotyants for help in healing the world from evil.</td>
<td>Desirable and a healer, bringer of joy at weddings; is the beloved one.</td>
<td>“The Aryanman prayer smites down the strength of all the creatures of Asgra Mainyu, … it is the greatest of spells, the very best of spells … the best healing of all spells.” (Y7.3.5)</td>
<td>Ard-wohshat Yashth 3</td>
<td>Milir Âdar Ardâvakhsh</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aav. Khvarenah Ph. Khvast</td>
<td>Divine Grace/good fortune/kingly glory</td>
<td>Of good fortune and bestower of Divine Grace.</td>
<td>Giver of health, wisdom and happiness.</td>
<td>Royal, sovereign, everlasting and life-increasing.</td>
<td>“We worship unto the kingly Glory, made by Mazda; most conquering…possessing health, wisdom and happiness, and is more powerful to destroy than all other creatures.” (Y7.19.9)</td>
<td>Zamyât Yashth 19</td>
<td>Milir Zamyât Ashhtad</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Parthian Coins

- King Vologeses I (c. 51 – 60 A.C.)
- King Ariabanes IV (c. 80 – 81 A.C.)
- King Osroes (c. 107 – 128 A.C.)
- King Vologeses III (c. 146 – 192 A.C.)
Zoroastrian Metaphysics

An Explanation of Some Terms

Metaphysics is one of the more abstruse of the philosophical sciences through which the workings of the cosmos may be examined. This philosophical study leads one to a better understanding of one's self and the relationship that this self has with the outside world.

In metaphysics one deals with questions like the origin of the world, the principles that govern it and indeed the nature of that which exists in the relative world. A study of metaphysics enables one to comprehend the paradoxes in life through an existential perspective of the world.

Existentialism “...is a 20th century philosophy centred upon the way man finds himself in the world. In existentialism, one regards human existence as not exhaustibly describable or understandable in mere scientific terms. Existentialism stresses upon the freedom and responsibility of the individual and the irreducible uniqueness of an ethical or religious framework.” (Webster's Dictionary p 401)

Antithesis is the rhetorical contrast of ideas by means of parallel arrangement of words. It is something in direct and unequivocal (leaving no doubt) opposition.

Axiom is a principle widely accepted on its intrinsic merit. It is a proposition regarded as a self-evident truth from which one can postulate.

Hypothesis is a tentative assumption made in order to draw out its logical or empirical consequences. It is the formulation of a natural principle based on an inference from observable data.

Empirical is relying on experience or observation alone, often without considering a system or a theory.

Infinite is subject to no limitation or external determination.

Essence is the permanent, ultimate intrinsic nature of matter as contrasted with the accidental element of being.

Existence is that which exists and within which a reality is affirmed.

Miscreation is the apparent existence of that which on its own cannot exist. It is parasitic to that which is existent.

Some Basic Metaphysical Axioms in Zoroastrianism

God

God Is The First Principle:
“... when I saw Thee to be the First One at the creation of the world...” (Y.43.5).

If we say that God is the first one or the first principle, then no thing can exist before God; for if something existed before God, then something other than God would have had to create Him (i.e. God), in which case God would not be the first one. This of course is untenable as Zarathushtra proclaimed God to be the “First One” in his hymnas.

God Is Uncreated:

If we take the axiom that God is the “First One”, then there can be no thing before God which could have created Him. Hence God is the Uncreated First One whose task it is to create. God's creations are a reality observable by man; hence God is seen as the source of creation in all the major religious systems of the world.

God Is Eternal:

“Thou who dost guard truth and the good mind for eternity...” (Y.28.11).

If God is deemed to be uncreated, then there can be no beginning and no end to God and hence He remains eternal. God, in other words, is the existent and permanent as contrasted with the temporary element in matter. Thus,
God is the source and essence of the irreducible and intrinsic nature of matter.

God Is Ever-Present, All-Knowing and Wise:
God is ever-present because He is the source of existence and therefore a fundamental part of it. The quality of all-knowingness (omniscience) is intrinsic and synonymous with the concept of wisdom.

Wisdom by definition implies a knowledge of all that was, is, and will be in the universe. Hence it is the all-knowing, wise God who is the Maker and the material of this world.

Wisdom is the source of all knowledge and the recognition or consciousness of that source is the reality of existence (i.e., wisdom itself). If the existence of that source of all knowledge (i.e., wisdom) is denied, then nothing can exist. If nothing exists, there can be no consciousness; for a consciousness with no thing to be conscious of, is a contradiction in terms. One has to be conscious of something, before one can identify consciousness; that something is the existence of the Uncreated, All-Knowing, First One, who in Zoroastrianism is called Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom.

God Is Totally Good and Perfect:
God in Zoroastrianism is deemed to be totally good and perfect. Hence, that which is imperfect (evil) cannot emerge from God, for if it did, then God would no longer remain totally good and perfect. In Zoroastrianism therefore, God cannot be held to be the bringer of imperfections such as misery, pain, suffering, poverty, disease or death. Here lies the intellectual strength of Zarathushtra’s teachings. Whilst others get confused about the tragedies and misfortunes in the world, a Zoroastrian is given a rational and theologically sound conceptual framework through which he may tackle these problems. A Zoroastrian does not need to resort to the theory of reincarnation or believe in a fatalistic divine plan in which man is relegated to being a mere puppet or a pawn in the drama of cosmic evolution.

How can an all-wise, all-knowledge Being who is kind, just and perfect, be in any way responsible for that which is even slightly imperfect or contrary to the inherent nature of His own Being? If, however, God does possess qualities which are contrary to His inherent good nature, then He would undoubtedly be morally responsible for them; and if that was the case, then He would cease to be the perfect good Being worthy of worship. In fact, “by ceasing to be perfectly good, God would cease to be God!” (The Teachings Of The Magi, R.C. Zaehner, p 58). Nowhere in the texts is there a shred of evidence to suggest that God in Zoroastrian doctrine is the source and perpetrator of evil.

From this it follows that evil cannot come from God, but is the moving away from the path of God; just as darkness does not come from light, but is the result of the moving away from light. Evil is the antithesis of that which is existent and inherently good. The apparent existence of evil in the relative world reflects the temporary non-omnipotence of God.

God Is Latently Omnipotent:
A temporarily non-omnipotent God should not be seen to be a weak or powerless Being, for in the Zoroastrian tradition, God is recognized to be the strongest (Y.28.9), the mightiest (Y.45.6) and indeed invincible (Y.1.8) at the end of time. A distinction should be made, however, between a Being who is all-powerful at all times and a Being who is very powerful as indeed God is in Zoroastrianism, but yet not all-powerful to prevent the onslaught of evil, eventually culminating in death.

If God is all-powerful, then most certainly it would be in His power to prevent all the misfortunes and tragedies that occur in the world. To say that God turns His face away (figur-
ately speaking), or allows misfortune to take place, surely undermines and makes a mockery of the inherent good nature and power attributed to an omnipotent Being. The emphasis in Zoroastrianism is upon the goodness and perfection of God, rather than the brute strength of an omnipotent Being. Thus, the concept of a Being who is held to be perfect as well as totally good and yet concurrently is deemed to be the creator and source of evil, is utterly untenable and a contradiction in terms.

On the other hand, by man recognizing God to be temporarily non-omnipotent, in no way implies that evil is equal to, and therefore as powerful as God. It is empirically verifiable that the will of Ahura Mazda continues to overwhelm the imperfections and inequalities in this world. The process of “creative evolution” is an ongoing one, for it is within the cumulative power of man to rid the world of disorder, poverty, misery, pain, suffering and eventually death.

Man in Zoroastrianism is the soldier who has been chosen to spearhead this evolution, through the recognition of a strongly contrasted ethical dualism, in order to vanquish the Lie. This ethical dualism in no way lessens the status or greatness of God; nor does it preclude a monotheistic belief in one God whose eventual supremacy at the end of time is unquestionable in Zoroastrianism. The task of man therefore, is to bring about the “Making Wonderful” when God will be made truly omnipotent!

Duality

In Zoroastrianism, an absolute distinction is maintained between the origin of good and its antithesis, evil. In other words, the factor of separation results in the relative world in which existence mirrors its antithesis, non-existence. Non-existence on its own, cannot exist; and that which cannot exist on its own cannot create, and that which cannot create knows not how to affirm, and that which cannot affirm is devoid of wisdom, and therefore is deemed to be the postulated nature of evil. Evil therefore clearly cannot come from God, as it is devoid of wisdom. Thus, there is a fundamental duality which absolves God from any taint of evil.

God, as perceived by Zarathushtra, is a rational Being who has ascribed to man a purpose in life, leading to a definite end; this end is when evil will be “put out of action” (Ph. a-kārēult) by man, through the conscious affirmation of good thoughts, words and deeds.

The Inexplicable Paradox of Evil

Evil in Zoroastrianism is not a reality in itself, but it is an existential paradox experienced by man, through the imbalance reflected in the physical world. It is only in the relative world that the states of excess and deficiency are observable and discernable, thereby giving an apparent existence to evil which does not and, in fact, cannot stem from any source.

Evil only mirrors a denial of that which is existent and intrinsically good. Being parasitic, it does not end, and in fact, cannot exist on its own. In other words, evil is ex nihilo; i.e. it arises from and out of nothing, and therefore has no real existence. Nevertheless, it is observable as the denial of the mean which in turn results in imperfection within the relative world.

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1. In the “One Hundred and One Names of God”, the second attribute mentioned is harwēg-tuwañ (Ph.) which when translated literally means “all power” or “all might”. The concept of omnipotence (all-powerfulness) is philosophically different and therefore should not be confused with the attribute of possessing “all power” in the relative sense. Furthermore, these 101 names have been compiled recently and are quite different to the traditional names found in the earlier texts.
God's World
(God in Action)

Wisdom
Knowledge
Truth
Honesty
Happiness
Joy
Pleasure
Optimism
Good Health
Prosperity
Fragrance
Light
Order
Good thoughts, words and deeds
Charity
Golden mean/Moderation
Life

The Antithesis of God's World
(Evil in Action)

Devoid of Wisdom
Ignorance
Falsehood/Lies
Deceit
Unhappiness/Misery
Despair
Pain
Pessimism
Illness
Poverty
Stench
Darkness
Disorder/Chaos
Bad thoughts, words and deeds
Greed
Excess and Deficiency
Death

Thus, a careful appreciation and an understanding of Zoroastrian metaphysics enables one to grapple successfully with the subtleties and complexities of a number of key questions that otherwise would remain unresolved. The Zoroastrian viewpoint is based upon a sound rationale and a thorough comprehension of profound objective principles which when integrated in daily living, help man towards the path of God-realization.
The Creation Story

In the Beginning

According to the story of creation, Endless Light is the place and location of Ohrmazd who is omniscient, eternal, infinite and totally good (Gbd. 1.3-6). His adversary, Ahriman, was at the abysmal station of darkness, for he possessed "after-wit" (ignorance) and an inherently destructive desire. Between Ohrmazd and Ahriman, "...there is a void and they are not connected with each other." (Gbd. 1.3-6).

At this time the world was in a perfect spiritual (Ph. mēnōy) state for everything was in an "unthinking, unmoving and intangible state" which lasted for 3000 years (Gbd. 1.14). Ohrmazd knew through His omniscience that Ahriman at some point would attack His perfect creations (Gbd. 1.13). True to form, Ahriman arose from the abyss and came to the precinct of the luminous stars where he saw Ohrmazd, "the Light", and attempted to attack Him; for it is the inherent nature of Ahriman to be malicious and destructive. The evil spirit saw the valour and fortitude of Ohrmazd which was greater than his own; and so resigned, he returned to the station of darkness where he "fabricated" his legion of evil, in anticipation of the forthcoming battle (Gbd.1.15).

Ohrmazd through His omniscience knew "the end of the affair" and so proffered peace with a warning to Ahriman: "If thou wilt not heed the contest thou wilt not render thyself useless, and it will be profitable to us both." (Gbd. 1.21). Through "after-wit", Ahriman rejected the peace offer thinking that Ohrmazd had made it through weakness and helplessness. Ohrmazd cautioned Ahriman again: "Thou art not omnific, O Evil Spirit! — that is, thou canst not destroy Me." (Gbd. 1.24).

Ohrmazd Creates Finite Time

Ohrmazd through His omniscience knew that if He did not fix a period for this battle, there would be "everlasting dispute and confusion" and in that "mingled state" (Ph. Gumēzishn), man would be continually seduced by Ahriman (Gbd. 1.25).

Ohrmazd, therefore, spoke to His adversary and fashioned a finite time of 9000 years for this "mingled state" to last (Gbd. 1.26). Ahriman agreed to this contest because of his inability to foresee the end. Ohrmazd through His omniscience knew that the first 3000 years would pass according to His own will and that the next 3000 years would be the period of heightened conflict, to be followed by the final 3000 years during which Ohrmazd would render Ahriman useless and ineffectual. (See diagram)

At the beginning of the first 3000 years of the Gumēzishn period, Ohrmazd chanted the all-important Ahunavīr prayer which sent the evil spirit back into the station of darkness where it lay stupefied and unconscious for the remaining 3000 years. It is during this stupefaction period of 3000 years that Ohrmazd created the physical world in order to combat the forthcoming onslaught of evil.

The Purpose of Creation

Ohrmazd it is said, saw with a clear vision and purpose that His adversary the evil spirit would never yield to opposition. Ohrmazd realized that in order to render this opposition ineffective, He had to create His good creations to lure Ahriman into conflict, which in turn would result in his final defeat.

"Out of His own Self, out of the Essence of Light, Ohrmazd created forth the astral body of His own creatures, in the astral form of luminous and white Fire, whose circumference is conspicuous..." Ohrmazd endowed this astral form with "...Power and that which is Time." (Gbd.1.44), He then created forth the astral body of the good wind, which became the unseen power for His work. Simultaneously, Ahriman "fabricated his creatures out of his own essence of darkness" and forthwith arose "The Untruthful Utterance"
— the Lic. Ohrmazd, out of the Essence of Light, produced the "Truthful Utterance" from which arose the spirit of the Yathā Ahū Vairūyā, through whom the original creations were fashioned (Gbd.1.50).

"He, first, produced the seven fundamental Beneficent Immortals, then the others; the seventh, Ohrmazd Himself; of the material creations, created in the spirit, the first are six; He Himself was the seventh; for, both, spirit first, and then matter, are of Ohrmazd;..." (Gbd.1.53).

"...He, first, created forth Vahman (Bahman), through whom arose the progress of the creatures of Ohrmazd; ...and then, (He created) Ardvahisht, then Shahrewar, then Spendidmad, then Hordād and Amurdād,..." (Gbd.1.53).

The traditionally accepted order of the seven Beneficent Immortals is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avestan</th>
<th>Pahlavi</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spenta Mainyu</td>
<td>Ohrmazd</td>
<td>Bounteous Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vohu Manah</td>
<td>Vahman (Bahman)</td>
<td>Good Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asha Vahishta</td>
<td>Ardvahisht</td>
<td>Best Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khshathra Vairya</td>
<td>Shahrewar</td>
<td>Desirable Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spenta Ārmaiti</td>
<td>Spendidmad</td>
<td>Holy Devotion/Piety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haurvatāt</td>
<td>Hordād</td>
<td>Perfection/Completeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ameretāt</td>
<td>Amurdād</td>
<td>Immortality/Undyingness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lion Griffins (c. 5th century B.C.)
Ohrmazd having fashioned the prototype of the material creations in a spiritual state, now proceeded to fashion these creations in a physical form.

With the aid of the luminous white Fire, He created the Sky which was to be the fortification and battleground from which evil would not be allowed to escape. Through the sky was fashioned the Water, which through its perfection would smite the demons. He produced the Earth which was made to float upon the waters. Fourthly, he produced the Tree which first took root in the middle of the earth and contained within it's seed “...all kind of force of the trees.” (GBd. 1a.11). Next, He created the Beneficient Cow who stood on the shore of the good river Dātīyah. Sixthly, He created Gayō.marēstan, the first mortal man—“...shining as the Sun;...his width was symmetrical as the height...” (GBd.1a.13). It is from Gayō.marēstan that all of mankind was to be born. (Ohrmazd, it is said, produced the six creations in the six periods of the Gāhānmātrs). The seventh creation was Fire whose radiance was from Endless Light, the throne of Ohrmazd. Fire was the only creation which was allowed to permeate the other six creations which became dynamic when Fire, the breath of God, entered into them.

Ahriman Arises: Heightened Conflict

Upon the completion of the stupfafaction period of 3000 years, Ahriman, the evil spirit, arose and in accord with his inherent desire set about to afflict the world of Ohrmazd. It is said that in the month of Fravardīn and the day of Ohrmazd, (Nūrāwī), at noon Ahriman pierced the sky like a serpent for he wished to drag the sky below the earth to break it. He then suffled the waters underneath the earth which he next attacked and polluted. He then poisoned the tree which withered immediately. “He let loose Greed, Needfulness (Pestilence), Disease, Hunger, Illness, Vice and Lethargy on the body of the Cow and Gayō.marēstan.....the Cow became feeble and ill, her milk dried up, and she passed away.” (GBd. 4.19-20). But the evil spirit could not find any means to kill Gayō.marēstan who lived for another thirty years after the catastrophic advent of Ahriman into the world. Finally, “...he came to the Fire; he mingled smoke and darkness within it...(and)over all the elements of the material world, a transformation to duality, opposition, combat, and mingling of high and low became manifest.” (GBd. 4.27-28).

The Apocalyptic Tradition: The Battle Begins

Once Ahriman attacked the seven creations the conflict in the relative world was truly underway. According to tradition, for the next 3000 years (i.e. 6000 years into the Gumesīshn period), the world fell into a lamentable chaotic state as a result of the havoc wrought by Ahriman. Inspite of this chaos and confusion, the soul of the Cow (the good vision) pleaded with the divine beings of the celestial world to send a redeemer in order that he may restore peace and happiness within God’s creations.

The plea for restoration was accepted by the divine beings who chose Zarathushtra as the saviour. Zarathushtra’s task was to salvage the world from the affliction of evil by making man aware of an ethical structure, in order that the forces of falsehood may consequently be vanquished.

It is said that Zarathushtra was born 6000 years into the Gumesīshn period (i.e. 9000 years from the beginning of creation). The scene was set for the forces of evil to be trounced through the moral weapon of good thoughts, words and deeds, the quintessence of Zarathushtra’s revelation.

The Promise of Ahriman’s Defeat

In the Pahlavi texts, two ideas are expressed with regards to the annihilation of evil. First, that Ahriman will be expelled from the
universe of Light, and reduced to a never-ending unconsciousness; secondly, that Ahirman will be overwhelmed together with his miscreations. The defeat of Ahirman will terminate his faculties, and his active force will utterly cease to be.

The orthodox view of his cessation as expressed by a ninth century writer, Manushchihir, was that the demons at some stage would not be in a position to incite or tempt the righteous ones, and that this would cause strife amongst the demons who would weaken and eventually cease to exist.

(This may be comparable to the modern-day understanding of “black holes”, which are exploding stars that destroy themselves because of the contraction of their internal mass, resulting in the prevention of light energy escaping. This occurrence is at the expense of a disproportionate increase in their density and gravity, which causes their own destruction).

We are told in the Creation myth, that Ahirman entered this world by piercing the sky and that he will leave, weakened and vanquished, through that same hole.

Special Help: The Saoshyants

Tradition has it, that special help will be needed during the final 3000 years after Zarathushtra's birth, in order to quicken the process of Ahirman being rendered powerless.

According to the Bundahishn and other Pahlavi texts, three saoshyants (those who will bring benefit) will be born at 1000 year intervals, after the prophet’s birth. These three redeemers will be born posthumously from the seed of Zarathushtra and Hwōi, which we are told, is miraculously preserved in Lake Kāsaoyā (GBd. 35.60 p 303) where it is being watched over by 99,999 fravashis. It is said that at 1000 year intervals, a virgin will bathe in this lake, and bear a child from the seed of Zarathushtra. In other words, the saoshyants will be men born of human parents.

In the Gāthās, Zarathushtra revealed, "...a man shall come who is better than a good man — the one who will teach us for the physical existence and for that of the mind, the straight paths of salvation to the true things with which Ahura Mazda dwells — (a man) who is faithful (and who) resembles you, O Mazda, who possesses the right knowledge and is wise." (Y.43.3).

The Tenth Millennium

In the tenth millennium, a precursor to the Saoshyant, by the name of Peshotan, will appear with a group of 150 righteous men who will endeavour to restore order and faith back into the world (GBd. 33.28). Thereupon, the first saoshyant Ukhshyat,ereta (“he who makes righteousness grow”) will be born. We are told that the creations will flourish for three years, during which the wolf species will disappear and for ten days, the sun will stand still at noon — then disaster will strike, but the struggle will continue. There will be bitter winters and many men, women, children and beasts will perish. The mythical king Jamshed will be driven back into the underworld (Av. var).

The Eleventh Millennium

In the eleventh millennium, the var will reopen and a new golden age will begin with the birth of the second saoshyant, Ukhshyat, nemah (“he who makes reverence grow”). It is said that there will be six years of abundance and prosperity during which the evil creatures will perish and the sun will stand still at noon for twenty days. Men will become gentler and their diet will change first to vegetables and then only to water (GBd. 34.2-3). However, once again evil will try and attack the good creations. Azhi Dahāka, the primordial demon, will break loose from his fetters and will go on a rampage. He will devour men and beasts and pollute the waters, earth, plants and fire (ZVY.9.14-16). Keresāspa, the righteous hero, will rise up to fight the demon who it is said will return to his abode vanquished.
Fifty-seven Years Before the "Making Wonderful"

Towards the end of the eleventh millennium the third son of Zarathushtra will be born known as Astvat. ereta, ("he who embodies righteousness") — the final Saoshyan. This will happen fifty-seven years before the great moment of the "Making Wonderful" (Av. Fra-shō. kerēti). It is during this period that the Last Judgement will take place when the sun will stand still at noon for thirty days. According to tradition, all the seven creations as well as the souls of the dead in Heaven and Hell will pass through a river of molten metal. Then the Lord of health and friendship, Airyaman, will melt all the metal in the mountains and it will flow upon the earth. The souls of the righteous will experience it as warm milk whilst those of the wicked will feel the pain and anguish as it "...walking in the world in melted metal." (Gbd. 34.18-19).

After this, the all-important resurrection will occur when the fravashis and the souls which are already in a spiritual state will unite with the resurrected future bodies (Ph. tan-i-pasēn). It is said that Gayā. marētan will be the first to
A SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF THE CREATION STORY

**BUNDAHISHN**
(Creation)

Perfect *Menōg*
(spiritual) state

- **0 Years**
  - Ahura Mazda's creations were in a spiritual state (i.e. unthinking, unmoving and intangible)
  - Ahura Mazda first perceived the existence of evil
  - Evil attacked unsuccessfully & returned to the abode of darkness, where it miscreated the *dēvs*
  - Ahura Mazda fashioned finite time & fixed the contest for 9000 years.

- **3000 Years**
  - Ahura Mazda chanted the *Ahumnavar* prayer & evil was stupefied for the next 3000 years
  - All passed according to the will of Ahura Mazda (i.e. the world was unaffected by evil)
  - Ahura Mazda fashioned the 7 creations in a *Gētīg* (physical) state, in anticipation of the onslaught of evil.

- **6000 Years**
  - Ahriman attacked Ahura Mazda's 7 physical creations
  - the real conflict began
  - the soul of the cow pleaded for a redeemer

**GUMEZISHN**
(The Mixture/ Mingled State)

Perfect *Gētīg*
(physical) state

- **9000 Years**
  - Zarathushtra was born

- **10,000 Years**
  - Ukhshyat.ēreta, the first posthumous son of Zarathushtra

- **11,000 Years**
  - Ukhshyat.ēmahi, the second posthumous son of Zarathushtra

- **(57 Years before the end of time)**
  - Astvat.ēreta, the 3rd & last posthumous son of Zarathushtra -the Saoshyant.

- **12,000 Years**
  - *Wizārishn* — the Separation; time will cease to exist & the world will be restored to a perfect immortal state.

**WIZĀRISHN**
(The Separation)

Ahriman is gradually weakened and rendered useless
A SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF THE APOCALYPTIC TRADITION

**GUMEZISHN**
(The Mixture)

- 10,000 Years
  - Peshotan - precursor to the Saoshyant
  - *Ukhshyat.ereta* - the 1st Saoshyant
  - creation will flourish for 3 years
  - wolf species will disappear
  - sun will stand still for 10 days at noon
  - disaster will strike, men will perish
  - King Jamshēd will be driven back into the underworld.

- 11,000 Years
  - *Ukhshyat. nemah* - the 2nd Saoshyant
  - the underworld will reopen
  - for 6 years there will be abundance and prosperity
  - evil creations will perish
  - sun will stand still for 20 days at noon
  - men will become gentle, will eat only vegetables, will have only water
  - evil will attack the good creations
  - Ažhi Dāhāka will break loose & will go on a rampage.
  - Keresāspa will fight and defeat Ažhi Dāhāka

- (57 years before the end of time)
  - *Aštav. ereta* - the 3rd Saoshyant
  - Last Judgement will take place
  - sun will stand still for 30 days at noon
  - all the creations will pass through molten metal
  - all metal will be melted by Aīrīyān
  - the Resurrection will take place
  - the creations will be perfect
  - the final *Yasna* will be solemnized by Ohrmazd
  - the Last sacrifice of the bull Hādāyans will be performed
  - the *Parahōoma* libation will be taken
  - the resurrected bodies will become immortal.

- 12,000 Years
  - The “Making Wonderful” will be completed and the Gumezishn period will come to an end.
  - *Wizārisn* - the Separation, when time will cease to exist.

**WIZĀRISHN**
(The Separation)
be resurrected followed by the rest of mankind. The whole of creation will be perfect in both the spiritual and physical worlds. It is at this point that the 9000 year Gomāzēshn period will draw to a close, when the last spiritual Yasna (Guj. Ujashe) will be performed and solemnized by Ohrmazd and His divinities.

The Final Sacrifice

It is at this service at twelve noon, that the last sacrifice of the bull Hachayans will duly be performed, and all the righteous will partake of it, together with the libation of the parahaoma prepared from the mythical white haoma plant. Upon the completion of this sacrifice, the resurrected bodies will become immortal like their already immortal souls. God’s creations will then experience for eternity, the joys of the senses as well as those of the mind and spirit. The “Making Wonderful” (Av. Freshō.kērēti) will then be achieved with the coming to an end of the Gomāzēshn period.

Wizārishn: The Separation

Upon the ending of the Gomāzēshn period when time will cease to exist, the Wizārishn (Separation) period will begin: when “...the world will never grow old and never die, never decaying and never rotting, ever living and ever increasing, and master of its wish, when the dead will rise, when life and immortality will come, and the world will be restored at its wish; ...” (Yt. 19.89).

In Zoroastrianism therefore, time is seen to move on a linear rather than a cyclic scale, having a beginning and a definite end. The role of man is to attain the salvation of both the body and spirit, in order to realize the total goodness and harmony of the seen and unseen worlds. The goal of mankind is to work towards this ultimate state of total goodness, when indeed “...creation...will grow deathless...” (Yt. 19.90), and time will cease to exist!
The Nature of Man

Man's Origin: The Legend

Mashya and Mashyānag

The seed of the first mortal Cayō.marētan
"...was thoroughly purified by the motion of
the light of the sun." Two portions of the seed
were guarded by Nērōsāng while the third
portion was entrusted to the earth. In forty
years a one-stemmed rēvās plant grew with
fifteen leaves; from this plant emerged Mashya
and Mashyānag, the first mortal man and
woman. They grew in such a manner, that
"...their arms rested behind on their shoulders
and one joined to the other they were connect-
et together and both alike." Between them
both, the light came down and entered their
souls. Breath went into them spiritually and
Ohrmazd spoke to them thus: "You are the
seed of man, you are the parents of the world,
you have been given by Me the best perfect
devotion...think good thoughts, speak good
words, do good deeds, and do not worship the
demons." Mashya and Mashyānag's first
thought was to please each other: their first
words were: "Ohrmazd gave the waters, the
earth, the trees, the beneficent animals,
the stars, the moon, the sun, and all good
whose manifestation is from ashta." Their first deed
was to wash themselves thoroughly.

Ahriman's Affliction

Ahriman rushed into the minds of Mashya
and Mashyānag and corrupted them, upon
which they exclaimed: "The evil spirit created
the waters, earth, plants, animals...and
through that false speech, they both became
wicked." Their souls were cast away to a
"wicked existence until the final material life."

Their Wanderings

For thirty days they searched for food and put
on garments of grass; eventually they came up
to a white-haired goat whose milk they drank.
Mashya uttered his second untruth by declaring
that his tranquility was due to the lack of food—
clearly a false statement. Another thirty days

later, they caught and slaughtered a white-
jawed sheep; they cooked the sheep and
offered three handfuls of meat to the fire, and
another handful was tossed to the skies, where
a vulture caught it and flew away.

Their Corruption

They first put on skin garments; next, they dug
a pit in the earth from which iron was obtained.
They then built a shelter, but later fought
with each other. Mashya and Mashyānag
continued to worship the demons and for fifty
winters it is said that they had no desire for
intercourse. Then the sexual desire arose and
to them were born twins - a male and female
child. "...owing to the sweetness of the
children, the mother devoured one and the
father the other. Ohrmazd then removed the
sweetness of the children" in order that
Mashya and Mashyānag would not devour
their children in the future, but in fact nurture
them.

The Generations to Come

"From them there were six twins of male and
female, all brothers and sisters.....There was
issue from each one of them in the fiftieth
year.....From them fifteen pairs were born,
every pair of whom became a race, and from
them there was the full progress of the world."

Comment:

This strange legend is full of allegory and prim-
mordial symbolism within which lie deep
philosophical principles that relate to man's
own nature. Man is the finest creation of God
and therefore potentially perfect. Within man
there lies a dichotomy (Mashya, Mashyānag)
which, when understood and nurtured, begins
to grow. Man's inner growth requires certain
natural ingredients but above all, there needs
to be an astute consciousness to realize that the
whole of creation is the reflected image of God.
Mashya and Mashyānag therefore were asked
to think good thoughts, speak good words and
do good deeds in order to cleanse themselves
psychologically and in doing so, prepare them-
selves for the onslaught of evil.

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2. Ahura Mazda's messenger to mankind.
As man is the storehouse of goodness, he becomes the natural target for Ahriman's afflication, and hence, according to the legend, Ahriman rushed into the minds of Mashya, Mashyānag and corrupted them. Throughout life there is an ongoing process of growth. Man "wanders" during this period and in doing so, he encounters a number of obstacles and temptations which he must learn to overcome. His strongest aid in this search is the good mind which enables man to make the right choice.

According to the legend, Mashya and Mashyānag made a number of mistakes and succumbed to the guile of Ahriman by uttering and living through the Lie. It is said that they continued to worship the demons for fifty winters with no desire for intercourse. The moral here, is that when man falls into a rut he continues to remain in it allowing the antithesis of good to gain a stronger hold within himself. Despite this, the forces of good are always there for man to turn to, as he cannot go past the point of no return until death.

If the goodness of this world is abused, then the force of God comes into operation in order to prevent the further deterioration of the good creations from taking place; just as when both Mashya and Mashyānag devoured their children, Ohrmazd "removed the sweetness of the children" in order that Mashya and Mashyānag would not be able to repeat the mistake.

The children of Mashya and Mashyānag, in a sense, represent the principle of the creative goodness of the world which, if abused as Mashya and Mashyānag did by devouring their children, leaves man in an unfavourable predicament. Man, by violating the principle of creative goodness, breaks his link with his Creator and as a result, he is unable to experience the essence of God's goodness which is otherwise available in abundance for man to enjoy.
The Five Constituents of Man

According to the Greater Bundahishn, man was fashioned in five parts by Ohrmazd:

- Body (Av. tanū)
- Breath of Life (Av. ushtana)
- Soul (Av. urvan)
- Prototype Image (Av. kehrpa)
- Guardian Spirit (Av. fravashi)

"As, body is that of matter; life is that which is connected with the wind and has the production and bringing of the complexion; the soul is that which listens, sees, speaks and knows with the consciousness within the body; the prototype is that which stays on the sun station; the fravashi is that which is before Ohrmazd the Lord; for that reason He so created, that when men die during the antagonism of Ahriman, the body may unite with the earth, the life with the wind, the prototype with the sun, and the soul with the fravashi, so that they cannot destroy the soul." (GBd. 3.13).

The Body

It is said in the Greater Bundahishn (14.9), that the soul was created first and then the body, for the soul directs the functions within the body. The body of man is likened to the creation of the material world: ". . . every person has his own length and width, whose skin is like the sky, flesh like the earth, bony skeleton like the mountain, veins like rivers, blood within the body like the water in the sea, stomach like the ocean, hair like the plants, there where the hair have grown thick like the forest, essences of the body like the metals . . . involution and exhalation of the breath like the wind...." (GBd. 28.4).

Clearly then, it is the duty of man to nurture and nourish the physical body in order that the "abode of the soul" may be in harmony with the other physical creations of Ahura Mazda.

The Breath of Life

The breath of life is given to man by the guardian spirit - the fravashi. Breath is likened to the wind and when it leaves the body, the body dies. "The breath of life is from the wind and is brought to life by the natural activity of its fravashi. Being alive, it preserves life in the body, just as does the householder's private physician or the knight's trainer. When it is separated from the body, the body dies, just as when the pillar of a house breaks, the house collapses." 4

Man does not survive upon death, which is deemed to be the temporary affliction of evil, as he is by nature a composite being. Death results in the sundering of the corporeal world of man making him incomplete.

The Soul

The soul is the spiritual perceptor or directing principle that helps man to generate a thought, word and deed from a multitude of choices that may be available to a person at any given time. The soul is deemed to be the decision-maker in an individual, who in turn is also endowed with the faculties of wisdom, reason, intellect, will, knowledge and conscience—qualities that aid the soul. In Zoroastrianism, the soul is likened to man's essence and the body in which it resides is seen as its weapon and garment; "for the soul's dwelling is in the whole body, just as the foot shape is in the boot" (MKh 48.10). It is essential therefore that the soul should be in perfect harmony and control over the body in order that it may direct man towards making the right choice. In the Dēnkard it is stated: "The soul, which consists of intellect and will, is lord over the body as a householder is over his house..." 3

The soul is the instrument that directs the body, the breath of life, the prototype image and the guardian spirit.

The Source:

Ahura Mazda fashioned the soul and implanted it in the prototype of man, from the station

3. DkM, pp 241-2, see Zechner, Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism p 271.
of Endless Light in the Abode of Song. It is said that the Yazatis paved the way for the soul in order that it may enter the body. When the soul functions properly, it makes the body work in harmony with its Creator, Ahura Mazda. The soul is the spiritual power of God in man, for “…in the soul is seated the faculty of comprehension, in order that it may become knowledgeable about the religion.” Clearly then, a righteous soul is the one that chooses the path of the “good religion.”

The Agents of the Soul:
The soul fulfills its role through the agency of a number of discernable qualities that an individual is latentely deemed to possess. The soul receives its inputs primarily from wisdom, innate reason and intellect which stimulates the faculty of knowing and the will to act in the soul. The knowledge of the soul also comes from will, and “…if man chooses the easy way and is indolent, he falls from virtue.” But if man exercises will in the right manner, the “bright substance of his soul” will not be harmed, as the sinful deeds will be driven out of his body.

The Attack:
The enemies of the soul are the creatures of the Lie – heresy, anger, venality, excessive desire, disaster, envy and any attribute which is in excess or is deficient in man. The Lie, when it attacks man, pollutes his essence and defiles his body by attempting to annihilate the soul; it is likened to “driving a wedge” between them in order that their union may be destroyed. Evil tries its best to tempt the soul into generating wicked thoughts, uttering wicked words and performing wicked deeds. The greatest triumph of evil is when man succumbs and makes the wrong choice. If the soul is vanquished, it will find itself in hell upon death where it will remain till the end of time.

The Counter Attack:
In the Dinkard, the soul is likened to “…the leader in battle or the commander of an army” whose chief task is to struggle with the Lie in order to vanquish it, just like “a knight, equipped with his horse, shields and vanquishes his enemies.” Nevertheless, the soul must proceed cautiously “in the same way as a man who may be without shoes, in a world full of serpents, scorpions, noxious creatures and prickly thorns.” (DK bk.6 Vol. 12 p 49). The triumphant soul gains freedom by realizing the virtues of truth and happiness which are derived through charity and hard work. The righteous soul, being in union with the body, helps man to follow the path of ashta which in turn leads to a fusion of harmony and joy in the world that man has chosen to live in.

The Reward:
The soul of man can never be destroyed or eternally damned. The reward or retribution is meted out to the soul at the Bridge of the Separator. The soul which is judged to be righteous returns to its Creator in the House of Song – Heaven; while a soul deemed to be wicked is cast down into the abyss of darkness-Hell. However, this punishment which is self-generated is of a transient nature because at the end of time, the good as well as the wicked souls will undergo a Last Judgement to be followed by the resurrection of the physical body. Time will cease to exist and the world will be restored to a perfect harmonious state.

Thus, man must learn to recognize the nature of wisdom from which arise innate reason, intellect, will and consciousness – qualities that are discerned by the soul and reflected through man’s conscience.

The Prototype Image
The constituent of man, known as the image of form (Av. kehrupa), is said to dwell in the station of the sun. The kehrupa is believed to be the link that man has to his original abode which is in Endless Light. Therefore, the kehrupa within

5. DKM pp241-2, Ziehner p271
6. DKM pp333-384, Ziehner p274.
man "...keeps a watch over wisdom, intellect, reason, understanding and memory, so that every person may engage himself in his work." (Per.Riv. p 570). The kehpga of man is sometimes identified as the aura which is believed to reflect the inner state of man's psychological world. Upon physical death if the kehpga lingers, it manifests as a ghost who is neither fully in this world nor in the next.

The Guardian Spirit
The Good, Strong, Beneficent Fravashis:

In Zoroastrian doctrine, it is believed that the fravashis who first existed in a spiritual (Ph. ménog) state, aided Ahura Mazda to fashion the prototypes of the physical creations of the sky, waters, earth, plants, cattle and man. "If the strong fravashis of the righteous had not given me help, there would not have been the cattle and men which are the best of the species; strength would have been of druji, power would have been of druji." (Yt. 13.12).

According to the Greater Bundahishn, "God asked the fravashis of men; '...What appears more advantageous to you when I may create you into material life: will you contend with the druji, ...or is it necessary to protect you for ever from the Adversary?' The fravashis of men saw...the evil that would arrive in the material world on account of the wicked Ahriman...and they agreed to go to the material world, in order to become perfect and deathless again, in the final material life, upto eternity and eternal progress." As the fravashis of men chose to incarnate into the physical world, they once again aided Ahura Mazda with the task of fashioning the physical creations. The fravashis are said to make "...the waters run and flow forward from the never-failing springs;...the plants grow up from the earth by the never-failing springs;...Through their brightness and glory, the females conceive and give birth easily...a man will be born, eloquent in meetings, who makes
his voice heard, whom Wisdom holds dear.... Through their brightness and glory, the sun goes his way....the moon goes her way....the stars go their way....” (Yt.13.14 – 16).

In Zoroastrianism, it is believed that every human being possesses a fravashi which acts as an observer in one’s life. It does not interfere with the decision-making process of man and hence unlike the soul (Av.urvan), the fravashi is not judged at the Bridge of the Separator. The fravashis are seen to represent the God-essence within man, for it is said that they possess “...the Wisdom of all-knowledge...”9 which links them to God. They are also believed to be the spiritual protectors of man who, when in difficulty, can invoke them. “They protect us when in distress with manifest assistance, with the assistance of Ahura Mazda and of the holy, powerful Srosh,...a friend of Ahura Mazda, whom Zarathushtra worshipped so greatly in the material world.” (Yt.13.146).

The fravashis are also said to maintain the natural functions of the body which upon death ceases to exist and hence it is said that the fravashi become weakened. “...these fravashis of the righteous are the strongest, O Spitama Zarathushtra, who are of the first teachers or those of the unborn men, the sahashyants, who are to restore the world. Of the others, the fravashis of the living righteous men are stronger, O Spitama Zarathushtra, than those of the dead.” (Yt.13.17).

Clearly then, man in the physical world is stronger and more complete than his counterpart in the spiritual world and it would appear thus, that it is for this reason that the fravashis of the dead need sustained prayers and ritual offerings from the living.

Upon death, which is deemed to be a temporary affliction of evil, the fravashis once again return to their earlier spiritual abode to wait for the final resurrection of the body, when it is believed that the body will be reunited with its counterparts, the spirit and the soul. Because of this firm doctrinal belief, it is untenable to accept the Hindu or Buddhist concept of reincarnation.

The fravashis of the righteous are strong, victorious and are said to possess rapid movement. “We worship the fravashis of the righteous, who are greater,...stronger,...bolder,...more powerful,...more victorious,...more healing,...who fly up in the thousands into the midst of the offerings...” (Yt.13.64). They are said to “...move with might, well moving, quickly moving, who move when invoked; who are to be invoked in the conquest of good, who are to be invoked in fights against foes, who are to be invoked in battles,...who give victory to their invoker, who give health to the sick man, who give good glory to the just man that brings libations...” (Yt.13.23 – 24). The fravashis are also the givers of boons, good health and fortune. They fly to the aid of those who invoke them during fashans which are performed at the time of birth, marriage or any other joyous occasion. It is said that the naturally good, incorruptible fravashis of the righteous keep the world in order and motion.10

Ashānām vanabhūṣaṁ sūrāṇaṁ spenceṇaṁ fravashayo yazahāte.

“We worship the good, strong, beneficent fravashis of the righteous”.

The God-given Talent within Man

The khwarr is the divine glory which brings man good fortune and prosperity in the material world, as well as it bestows “spiritual excellence” in the divine world. It has also been described as “the God-given talent or grace” which helps man to obtain the worldly skills. Every man has a khwarr (Av.kharenah) which resides within him; the khwarr is said to have pre-existing man’s physical birth and it

9. GBd.3.24 p45.
10. See Appendix 1.
represents by way of talents, the latent qualities within man which are to be developed in life.

The soul is the motivating force and the prime mover within man while the khwarr has within it, potential talents which are to be realized by man who must endeavour to nurture and cultivate the khwarr to its full capacity, because “growth, fulfillment and prosperity” are integral parts of Zoroastrian doctrine. Zaechner referred to it as “the religion of creative evolution” and said: “The growth of the individual is seen as part of the growth of the whole community” — all leading towards the “Making Wonderful” (Zaechner p 268).

In the Greater Bundahishn, it is stated; “The khwarr was produced first, and then the material body...both of them changed from the astral body of a plant into the astral body of a man, and that the light (khwarr) which is the soul, entered spiritually into them.” 11 Thus the khwarr and the soul are sometimes seen to be synonymous; however, the soul is endowed with intellect and will, whilst the khwarr comprises of man’s latent talents which have to be consciously developed in order that they may be realized.

The Soul’s Hamkars (Co-workers)

Wisdom: The Knower of All that is to be Known

In the Mēnōg-T-Khrah, Wisdom is described as “...more moving than any motion...she passeth and goeth through all things, by reason of her pureness, she is the breath of the power of God and a pure influence flowing from the Lord. No defiled thing can fall upon Wisdom... She is the brightness of everlasting light... the unspotted mirror of the power of God and the image of His goodness.” In this verse is conveyed the stupendous imagery to describe the inexplicable nature of Wisdom, whose source is allegorically referred to as “...what opens the soul’s eye to seeing those things that the soul (alone) can see, just as the source of light can be defined as what opens the bodily eye to things that are visible to it.” 12 In other words, it is the awareness within man which leads him to the source of Wisdom. Wisdom, being uncreated, does not come from a source but generates its own source from which all else emerges — the knower of all that is to be known. Man should strive to discern Wisdom by existentially experiencing the essence of undefiled purity and total goodness in the material world. If Wisdom was devoid of goodness and perfection or if Wisdom was tainted with the slightest imperfection, then God, Ahura Mazda, would not be perfect and if He was deemed not to be perfect, then He would not be worthy of worship.

Man’s intellectual quest in Zoroastrianism is to discover the nature of Wisdom by training the mind to seek it. God is Wisdom whose inherent nature is to further the “gnosis” of this world. Wisdom needs no Creator as Wisdom “is”, for it affirms itself to itself. Being the uncreated first principle, Wisdom is the source of creation that reflects its own inherent nature, which manifests itself through the essential goodness of the physical world.

In the Dēnkard it is stated that a man who can discern through innate wisdom can “comprehend well, anything which is manifest from the Avesta and Zand; ...however he who discerns things through innate and acquired wisdom, will comprehend all that has been and all that will be.” 13 Clearly then, there are two types of wisdom. He who possesses and recognizes innate wisdom is undoubtedly wise; however, the wiser man is he who uses innate wisdom to acquire greater wisdom in order to comprehend the infinite Wisdom of the Lord. It is further stated in the Dēnkard, “...the good nature of him who has no wisdom in him, is like unto a house which (is) full of

light and without defects, but remains closed and is never used. And the good nature that is coupled with wisdom, (is) like unto a house which is full of light and without defects, wherein dwells a diligent man...”

Man appears to be the only creation to have been given a mind as well as a conscious nature in order that God may be recognized through His own inherent quality of Wisdom by man, whose duty it is to seek it. The man who comprehends this eternal truth by exercising perfect control and balance within his character, nature and will to act, is a man who is truly wise; wise in the sense of being in empathy with the inherent nature of God — Wisdom. “...The Wisdom that is more excellent than any other, is the Zoroastrian religion adorned as it is with Wisdom.”

The qualities of Wisdom are beautifully summed up in the Menag-i-Khrad:

1. The whole world is given the power, strength, knowledge and skillfulness through original Wisdom.
2. The knowledge and skillfulness of the world, as well as the learning and the instruction of every trade is through Wisdom.
3. Good living, comfort, enjoyment comes through Wisdom.
4. The process of procreation is also through Wisdom.
5. The curing of diseases is through Wisdom.
6. The arrangement of the sun, the stars as well as good thoughts, words and deeds are through Wisdom.
7. The rains and properties of heaven are from Wisdom.
8. The arrangement of the sky, waters, earth, plants, cattle, man and fire are through Wisdom.
9. The overwhelming and defeat of Ahriman and the demons will also be through Wisdom.
10. The pious souls escaping from hell will be through Wisdom.
11. The final resurrection of the body will also be through the assistance of Wisdom.

In short, all that is good is and will come from Wisdom.

Innate Reason

Innate reason gives man the power to think, infer and comprehend in an orderly or rational way. It is the faculty of clear vision through which man gains insight into the workings and nature of the physical, psychological and spiritual worlds. Reason, on a spiritual level, may be recognized as the supra-rational which is often allied to intellectual intuition, a domain in which man begins to understand the eternal and immutable principles of life.

Zoroastrian spirituality is not gained through blind faith and belief, but through the use of the mind which allows man to reason and thereby understand the purpose of life. Innate reason is one of the components of the mind that has to be trained in order that man may generate fewer wrong thoughts, words and deeds. Reason on a psychological level, is the power to arrive at the right decision and conclusion, whilst the source of orderly conduct is the manifestation of reason in the physical world. Reason is said to sustain Will and impel it to perform certain actions. In the Denkard, reason is likened to “a horseman who drives his horse on, or restrains it with the bridle, controlling it with his thighs.”

Thus in Zoroastrianism, man is encouraged to develop the faculty of reason in order that through controlled will, an individual may choose to generate the right thought, word and deed.

16. MKR. s7 p180-2.
17. DkM. 306.2-12, 258.6 14, Zaehezer p275.
Intellect and Will

Intellect may be defined as the power or ability to acquire knowledge, as well as the power to apply it. Man distinguishes himself from the other creations by possessing intellect which is housed in the mind. Through intellectual insight, man is able to gain a clear vision into both the seen and unseen worlds. True intellect transcends the dimension of habitual thought, as within the intellect lies the capacity of knowledge which should not be confused with the mere gathering of facts. The duty of man is to apply this knowledge judiciously towards the betterment of mankind. With true knowledge the veil of gnosti between God and man is removed, for it is the desire to gain knowledge that leads to further knowledge for its own sake. One cannot seize knowledge from the outside nor should it become one's personal domain, as knowledge is the intellectual appreciation of wisdom which is always available to those who seek it.

Allied to the intellect is man's will which enables him to implement the choice of thought, word and deed. Will is conscious awareness that makes man different from the other creations. Man is endowed with free will in order that he may gain mastery over his desires. In the material world it is only man who is said to possess free will, which is man's God given birthright; it is only man who is capable and in a position of imposing his will upon the other creations and in doing so, he bears a special responsibility towards them. The judicious use of free will, then, is to learn to exercise the right choice through conscious awareness.

Consciousness

In the Dēnkard, consciousness is likened to “…the householder’s house lighted… which enables the householder to see inside the house …just as the sun illuminates the world, and a lamp illuminates the house.”

A man who chooses to be conscious is aware of a deeper dimension of his existence. Man must attempt to be scrupulously honest with himself in order that there may emerge an intellectual awareness. Consciousness thus is a sensitivity that enables man to perceive the harmony and inter-dependence of both the seen and unseen worlds.

Conscience: The Sentinel within Man

Man is endowed with a conscience which in any given situation reflects the thought, word and deed process that should be implemented in daily life. The conscience receives its information from the intellectual faculties imprinted in man, which are wisdom, knowledge, reason, intellect and will. The conscience of man is innately good and its chief role is to mirror the true reality of thought, word and deed, which the soul as the “commander in chief” accepts or rejects. The righteous man is he who works in accord with his conscience, in order that the Lie may be overwhelmed by the forces of truth.

It is stated in the Persian Rivāyats, “….the conscience admonishes the body and soul to do good and abstain from evil…” (Per.Riv. p 571). Clearly then, man's duty is to follow his conscience – the sentinel within him.

Zarathushtra's Man: The Ashavan

In Zoroastrianism, man is the focal point upon whom the whole corpus of the good religion rests. He is seen to be the prime agent through whom the theory and practice of the religion are tested and put into action, for it is the task of man to bring about the final renovation and healing of the world, a concept which in Zoroastrianism came to be known as the Frashō-kērēti, the “Making Wonderful”. Clearly then, man is not just a puppet or a pawn in the unfolding of this cosmic drama, but he is the most productive, purposeful creation of God, whose task it is to vanquish the Lie in order to bring about the creative evolution of this world. Unhampered by the shackles of predestination, the role of man is...
to become the master of his future, as well as to be the moulded of the relationship that develops between himself and his Creator.

Hence, man can either choose to be part of the fulfillment of the vision of God or he can cast himself down into the abyss of darkness, ignorance, and unfulfillment. Thus in Zoroastrianism, man is enjoined to generate growth, fulfillment and prosperity in order to become the "Living Truth" — the Aishavat!

A Schematic Diagram of the Direct Inputs to the Soul

- Wisdom (undefined goodness)
- Innate Reason
- Intellect (power of knowing)
- Will (conscious awareness)
- Knowledge (gnosis)
- Conscience
- Soul
- Thoughts, Words and Deeds
Frayaskh - the guardian spirit of men
Appendix 1

The Fravashis

The literal meaning of the Old Iranian word fravarti (Av. fravashi, Ph. travahr, Guj. faroahr) has been a matter of much debate amongst scholars. The Avestan word fravashi does not occur in the Gāthās but is first found in the ancient Yasna Hāptanghāiti (Y.57.3) in which the “fravashis of the righteous” (Av. ashaa nthā fravashō) together with Ahura Mazda are invoked.

Some Interpretations:

H. Lommel thought that the word fravashi meant “capable of making a moral choice” from the verbal root var meaning “to choose”.

N. Söderblom interpreted the word to mean “protector” from the verbal root var meaning “to enclose, cover”.

J. H. Moulton suggested the meaning of the word to be “he who makes pregnant” from the verbal root var which means “to make pregnant”.

H. W. Bailey has perhaps proffered the most accurate interpretation. He has taken the word fravashi to mean “the departed spirit of a hero”, from the root vṛti which means “possessor of valour”.

The Pre-Zoroastrian Concept:

In pre-Zoroastrian times, it was held that the spirits of the departed heroes lived with the gods rather than in the underworld, and hence the spirits of the warriors came to be identified with the spiritual celestial world. The spirits were conceived to be powerful, winged warlike beings who were worshipped and invoked by their living descendents in order that they may be helped and protected by them.

19. See Mary Boyce, History of Zoroastrianism Vol.1 p118.

The Festival of Hamaspthaēdaya

The sixth Gāhēmbār festival (Av. Hamaspthaēdaya, Ph. Fravardiñōn, Guj. Muktē) is celebrated in honour of man and is dedicated to the fravashis, who it is said mingle and remain on the earth for ten days. “We worship the good, strong, beneficent fravashis of the righteous, who come flying along from their home at the time of Hamaspthaēdaya; then there, they walk to and fro, for ten nights desiring to know thus...” (Yt.13.49). Both the righteous and wicked souls are also formally invoked in order that they may participate in the religious ceremonies through which their presence is believed to be felt. A series of rituals such as the stūn, aṣṭīnān, jarokhshī and bājī are performed in honour of the departed souls who are offered food and fragrant flowers which are ritually consecrated during these ceremonies.

Additional Points

1. The Muktē should traditionally be performed for one generation (16-25 years). If this is not possible, the prayers and ritual invocations for the departed soul continue as they are collectively remembered and invoked at all the fire temples where the Muktē ceremonies are held.

2. The Muktē rituals (except bājī) can also be performed at home, providing due care is taken to maintain the laws of purity. It is important that the departed are remembered by the living, as there appears to be a well-knit integration between the physical and spiritual worlds; for the fravashi ask “Who will praise us? Who will worship us? Who will sing hymns to us? Who will propitiate us...?” (Yt.13.50).

The “Festival of All Souls” is one of the most important festivals of the Zoroastrian calendar, in which a link and continuity is maintained between the spirits of the departed and those who invoke them, the living.
Death and the Hereafter

Death: The Temporary Triumph of Evil

According to the Zoroastrian doctrine, death occurs when the breath of life (ushṭana) leaves the body upon it being afflicted by evil. "...ungodly Ashmaoqha directly defiles the creatures of the good spirit...and he smites the faithful man with a deadly blow that parts the soul from the body." (Vd.5.36—37).

Contrary to popular belief, death in Zoroastrianism is not ordained by God but it is the temporary triumph of Ahriman, the evil spirit, whose inherent nature is to cause destruction within the physical world. In the Greater Bundahishn it is stated, "Thereupon, the Evil Spirit spoke: 'I shall not bring help unto Thy creatures, nor shall I offer praise; I will destroy Thy and Thy creatures too, unto eternity'..." (Gbd.1.22).

The first person to conceive death to be the work of an apparent agency outside of God, was none other than Zarathushtra himself. In the Gāthās, the prophet brilliantly outlined the need for a fundamental duality within the relative world which, he declared, was in a state of heightened conflict. He saw the protagonists of this cosmic battle to be two spirits—Spenta Mainyu the Incremental Spirit, and Angra Mainyu the Hostile Spirit. "...In thought, in word, and in action, they are two: the better and the bad. And between these two, the beneficent have correctly chosen, not the maleficent." (Y.30.3).

The Antagonists

Not only did Zarathushtra realize the existence of a primordial duality, but he recognized the importance and rationality of not attributing evil to emerge from God. "Yes, the person indeed who shall try to destroy us, Wise One, is different from us: he is a son stemming from deceit's creator and thereby maleficent (to those) who exist." (Y.51.10). The Incremental Spirit, he declared, was the Creator of life, while he saw the Hostile Spirit as being the bringer of death. So diametrically opposite are the natures of these two spirits, that he revealed in his hymns, "Yes, I shall speak of the two fundamental spirits of existence, of which the Bounteous One would have thus spoken to the evil one: 'Neither our thoughts nor teachings nor intentions, neither our preferences nor words, neither our actions nor conceptions nor our souls are in accord'." (Y.45.2).
If good and evil do come from the same source, why would Zarathushtra so emphatically have declared their different sources and irreconcilable natures? Can a perfect, all-good Being (God) remain perfect, if part of the nature of that Being is deemed to be evil? In Zarathushtra's mind the answer was clearly "NO!". If he thought God to be partially evil, then that element of God would have to be relegated to Hell—clearly an untenable axiom to postulate, as nowhere in the Gāthās is God declared to be imperfect nor is He held to be responsible for the source of evil and imperfection in the world.

The great strength of Zoroastrian doctrine lies in the fact that the agency which perpetrates excess or deficiency by way of poverty, chaos, disease and eventually death, is not that which is ordained by God but that which is perpetrated by the antagonistic spirit of evil.

To conclude, death, the negation of life, is the maleficient action of a hostile evil spirit who is fundamentally antagonistic to the inherent goodness of God. Therefore in Zoroastrian doctrine, God cannot be held responsible for death nor can He be deemed to be the creator or perpetrator of evil in the world.

Additional references indicating death to be the work of evil in Zoroastrian doctrine:
1. "...who, by reason of the commandments of deceit, continue to destroy the creatures of truth..." (Y.31.1).
2. "It is suffering and death that destroys the body, not the Creator whose will is good, and who preserves and maintains the body." (Skg18.64).
3. "...and the destroyer is the accursed destructive spirit, who is all wickedness and full of death, a liar and a deceiver..."
4. "The good spirit tries to prolong life, whereas the evil spirit strives to destroy life, and to frighten away the soul."

5. "...he lets loose Ashtavidat (the demon of death) with a thousand death-producing dēv..." (GBd.4.24).
6. "...and Astavidat (the demon of death) who devours every creature and knows no satiety." (MKh.2.117).

The After-life Doctrine

Upon death the wholeness of man is sundered, for "...when men die, during the antagonism of Ahriman, the body unites with the earth, the life with the wind, the prototype with the Sun, and the soul with the spirit, so that they cannot destroy the soul." (GBd.3.13).

At the Point of Death

In the Dēnkard a clear reference is to be found as to what happens at the point of death. "...there is the overpowering attack upon the body by the 'death causer' and the 'inactivity producer' demon Astavidat, and the distressful separation of life from it...and the dragging into the body of those demons...who are the separators." (Dk.bk.5, 19.1 Vol.10 p 16).

The act of death is the triumphant attack by evil who violently snatches away the breath of life. "The injury of the destroyer to the body of those passed away is contaminating: the nasu (corpse demon) rushes on it, and owing to its violence, it becomes triumphant over the life of the righteous man, and puts itself into the place of the body, that body is then for that reason, called nasai (dead matter)." (Dd.17.7, SBE Vol.18 p 39).

The Soul's Timidity

Upon death, the soul is timid and fearful like "...a stranger who does not find his way anywhere and is not able (to find it out) and remains in torment." (Saddar Bd.40.5).

A Three-day Wait

The Potential Righteous Soul

According to the Hādokht Nask (Yt.22.1 – 20), "Upon death, the soul takes its seat near the
head chanting the sacred hymns."

A series of rhetorical questions is allegedly said to have been asked by Zarathushtra to Ahura Mazda.

"O Ahura Mazda, most Holy Spirit, Creator of the material world, Thou Holy One! When a righteous one dies, where does his soul abide the first night... on the second night... on the third night?"

Ahura Mazda answered thus —

"It takes its seat near the head, chanting the Ushnavaiti Gāthā, proclaiming happiness. On that night, his soul experiences as much joy as all that which (he experienced as) a living being." (Yt.22.1-6).

In the Vīshāspa Yastī, there is an accretion in which it is stated that the righteous soul dwells with all its good words on the first night, all its good deeds on the second night, and dwells on the path just before Heaven and Hell on the third night (Yt.24.54).

In the Pahlavi texts, a more elaborate description of the soul’s three-night sojourn is given. It is stated that during these three nights, various demons like Vizaresha, Astarvadat and Aeshma attempt to capture and kill the soul. During this three-day vigil, the Yazata Sraosh is invoked by the living as Sraosh is the chief protector of the soul as well as the Lord of Prayer. The Yazata Sraosh may also be propitiated in advance by the living soul in anticipation of its future death, through the performance of the zindu ravān ceremony (Per. Riv. p 422).

The Potential Wicked Soul

In the Hādokht Nask it is stated that a wicked soul suffers immensely as it is confused and in a distressed state. It runs around the head, chanting the words of the Kima Gāthā — "...Unto what land, O Ahura Mazda, shall I go to flee? Whither to flee? On that night his soul experiences as much unhappiness as all that which (he experienced as) a living being." (Yt.22.19-24). The soul laments and suffers from much mental anguish, as it begins to realize the impending doom at the Bridge of the Separator (Av. chinvat, pérēš). The demons Vizaresha, Astarvadat and Aeshma triumphantly taunt the wicked soul.

In the Pahlavi texts it is stated that the soul spends the first, second and third nights with its bad words, bad deeds and on the precipice of Hell respectively. The wicked soul, recognizing its folly and doom, wishes to return back to earth, only to realize that it is on a path of no return. "...I am separated from everyone and from the joy of the material world, which is the great hope of spiritual life; and I have attained to the severe accounting and to greater danger." (Dct.16.4). As the soul utters these words, it regrets its mistakes and short-sightedness, knowing that it is going to become a guest in the House of Decree (Hell). In short, the souls of the wicked — repenting, rebuking, wailing and distressed — proceed to await their Judgement on the dawn of the fourth day after death.

The Dawn of the Fourth Morning

According to the Hādokht Nask, at the end of the third night when dawn appears, the soul of the righteous person passes through beautiful plants and trees, inhaling the fragrant scents. A southerly wind blows and advancing with the wind, appears the daēnā (conscience) in the form of a maiden who is beautiful, radiant, white-armed, robust, fair-faced, erect, high-breasted, and of glorious lineage. "What virgin art thou?", asks the pious soul. "I am the daēnā of thine own self; I am, O youth, thy good thoughts, words and deeds." (Yt.22.9-12). The daēnā then accompanies the righteous soul to the Bridge of the Separator where it will be judged.

If the soul is potentially wicked, then on the dawn of the fourth morning, it experiences frost and terrible stenches. A foul-smelling
notherly wind blows, bringing the conscience in the form of a hideous hag. In the Ardiy Witr W Nmng, the hag is described as "...a profligate woman, decayed, naked, with exposed thighs in front and buttocks behind, bony-legged, gaping, lean-hipped, with endless spots like scales (AWN 17). The surprised soul asks of her identity. "I am thy bad deeds, O youth of evil thought, word, deed and of evil conscience. It is on account of thy will and action, that I am ugly and vile, disgusting and diseased, decrepit and evil complexion, unfortunate and distressed as it seems to thee", replies the old hag (AWN 14-15). The hag then accompanies the wicked soul to the Bridge of the Separator.

The Moment of Judgement

All the souls of the departed undergo a judgement at the Bridge of the Separator which is believed to be guarded by the celestial dogs. The soul is judged by a team of heavenly assessors, namely Ahura Mazda, the Amesha Spentas, Zarathushtra, Rashn (Lord of Justice), Mithra (Lord of Contract) and Sraosh (Lord of Prayer). It is here at the Bridge of the Separator that the soul receives its reward or punishment depending upon the balance of its thoughts, words and deeds.

The reward or meted out by the judges, while the soul's retribution appears to be the result of its own wicked thoughts, words and deeds. It is the soul which has wrought havoc upon itself by choosing to become imperfect, and thereby black-balling itself from the House of Song where only the righteous souls dwell. Thus, it is the soul which through its own bad thoughts, words and deeds, brings about a self-inflicted retribution (upon itself). Ahura Mazda, therefore, cannot be held responsible for the soul's torment and punishment in the hereafter, as the perpetration of suffering and pain is alien to the inherent nature of Ahura Mazda.

If found righteous, the soul ascends to the abode of joy and light; while if wicked, the soul is dragged into the abode of gloom and darkness by the demon Vizaresha. For in the Gathas, Zarathushtra declares — "Heavenliness shall be the future possession of him who shall come to a truthful person (now), (But) a long lifetime of darkness, foul food, the word woe — to such an existence shall your conception, ...lead you, ye deceitful ones." (Y.31.20).

If the good thoughts, words and deeds equal the bad thoughts, words and deeds, the soul is relegated to an in-between state (Ph. hamsi/tagā) (AWN 6.1 – 12).

Heaven: A Place of Perpetual Profit

In the Pahlavi texts, Heaven is seen as a bright, joyful, happy place, and one of perpetual profit (Ph. hamsišk šiti), where all is imperishable and perfect. Here, the soul eternally experiences pleasure and tastes the fruits of immortality.

Hell: A Dungeon of Darkness, Gloom and Stench

Hell is described as a very narrow and fearful place in which there exists darkness, gloom, stench and extremes of temperature, where no existence is possible. The noxious creatures tear, seize and worry the souls of the wicked who are in a perpetual state of misery, pain and suffering (AWN 18).

Reincarnation: A Zoroastrian Heresy

In Zoroastrian doctrine man is given the assurance that divine justice, by way of spiritual accounting, is meted out to all. The soul must discern judiciously, as it incarnates only once into the physical world. Contrary to popular belief, there seems to be no textual evidence supporting the theory of reincarnation, by which is meant the repeated return of the same soul in different earthly forms.

3. Traditionally, it is believed that the soul receives its judgement on the dawn of the fourth morning after death, when the priests stand up to recite the Atash Nwiyah prayer in the poachit roat nu oothannnu ceremony.
Eduljee, in a recently written article, has argued, "Just as the fate of a soul in this life is determined by its behaviour in its former life, so its fate in the former life must have been determined by its life previous to it, and that life by the one that preceded it, and so on ad infinitum. This means that there is no point in time when one can say: 'Existence begins now'; in other words, there is no point at which creation begins and if there is no creation, then there can be no Creator. But one of the prime attributes of God is that He is the Creator. This argument is not just a clever play of words. The logic of reincarnation is not compatible with the belief in a Creator and therefore was accepted by Mahavira and the Buddha, whose religious teachings were founded upon an atheistic ('no God') point of view. Zoroaster, on the other hand, perceived Ahura Mazda as the One, Supreme God, as well as the Creator of everything good..."

Eduljee continues, "...It is noteworthy that Christianity and Islam, which are religions that have spread all over the world and that satisfy the hopes and aspirations of, and give comfort and consolation to millions of people, do not include reincarnation in their doctrinal beliefs. These religions have certain common features with Zoroastrianism: they all believe in one God; God is the Creator of the Universe; and man as God's supreme creation, has a vital part to play in fulfilling God's purpose; there is a Heaven and a Hell, in which the souls are rewarded or punished according to the lives that they have led on this earth; the life span of the world is limited in time, with a beginning, a middle and an end; and at the end, there is a resurrection. Religions with these characteristics have no place for reincarnation."

Eduljee has also clearly shown that the much quoted Gāthic verses of Y.46.11 and Y.49.11 in support of reincarnation, have been wrongly translated and interpreted by the advocates of reincarnation, namely, Taraporewala and Dabu.

In the Denkard Vol. 2 p 83, it is stated — "...the soul of that sinful man owing to his sin being greater than his righteousness is imprisoned in the abodes of Hell, with the evil-bodied ones. And the information which is found in the good religion about this (matter) is this, that for him there is no liberation till the time of Prashōkereti (Making Wonderful), but that he will have to suffer (till then) the pains and slings of Hell.” If, as it is stated, the wicked soul remains in Hell till the end of time, then how can the same soul reincarnate into another earthly body?

The strongest evidence against the theory of reincarnation comes to us from the Jamasp Namag, in which it is clearly stated, “They cannot return to this world once again so that they may do virtuous deeds.” (Per.Riv. p 485).

According to the theory of reincarnation, a person is punished or rewarded in this life for the bad or good actions done in a previous incarnation. How can a morally just and benign God inflict punishment upon a person, who in this present existence is not even aware of the alleged crime that is meant to have been committed in an apparent, previous life? It is the soul of man that ensures a spiritual existence in the hereafter, depending upon the thoughts, words and deeds generated in this life. No intercession is possible for the soul of a man who continuously chooses to be the agent of excess or deficiency in this world. Clearly then, the task of man during this only earthly sojourn is to become the master of his destiny and not be a mere pawn of a never-ending, cyclical, futile existence.

The Zoroastrian Answer

It is popularly believed by those who subscribe to the theory of reincarnation, that the inequalities in this world are the direct result of a previous incarnation. Their argument runs on the lines that some people
are born rich and others poor, some are born healthy and others diseased or maimed because God (they believe) in His divine plan, has ordained a series of rewards and punishments upon His creations. A strange and cruel God surely, if He chooses to punish His creations in such an arbitrary merciless way by inflicting unhappiness, pain, poverty, suffering, and ultimately death upon them.

According to the Zoroastrian viewpoint which is an eminently rational one, the inequalities within our world are not deemed to be God-ordained, but are held to be the direct result of the constant open conflict between the forces of good and evil. It is the innate nature of evil to be corrupt and destructive, thereby causing continuous affliction upon the whole creation in the relative world. "...and the destroyer is the accursed destructive spirit, who is all wickedness and full of death, a liar and a deceiver." 3

In other words, evil due to its intrinsic nature will continue to attack God’s perfect creations at random, in order to thwart the progress and increase of all that is good in this world. Therefore, the inequalities reflected through poverty, despair, misery, pain, suffering, disease are not due to a previous life punishment, but exist as a result of the constant battle between the two antagonistic forces in this life. The inequalities will continue to remain until man, through the ethical weapon of good thoughts, words and deeds, is able to overwhelm the Lie and thereby trounce the forces of darkness, thus ridding the world of evil and making God as a result of it truly omnipotent!

The "reincarnationists" also claim in support of their theory, that there are some people in the world who are able to narrate factual occurrences inspite of not having had any previous knowledge of the same. Their explanation for this phenomenon is based upon the theory of reincarnation on the grounds that, as a result of a previous life experience, one is able to recount something factually and accurately in this life. Once again turning to Zoroastrian doctrine, it is stated that upon death there is a hereafter wherein the soul dwells in Heaven or Hell, depending upon the life it has led in this world. It is also believed that the souls of the dead posses memory, and therefore are able to maintain a link between both the physical and spiritual worlds. Does not a Zoroastrian invoke the blessings of the souls and spirits of the departed near and dear ones in a jashan ritual, or during the festival of Haminzanim (Guja Mubad)? The explanation therefore, as to how a person is able to recount something factual about a previous existence, may lie in the fact that a few people in this world are able to unconsciously "tune in" to the "memory banks" of deceased souls whose memories are temporarily tapped by the living. This being the case, somebody living in this life could quite easily narrate a previous experience or event in a very authentic and factual manner, without in any way having undergone the process of reincarnation in the first instance.

The concluding remarks of J.E. Sanjana on this topic are particularly apt. "...I have heard men of fair education wondering why any objection should be taken to a Zoroastrian believing in the dogma of reincarnation....A little thought should show that it matters a great deal; a little reflection should show that faith in this dogma is so incompatible with the letter and spirit of traditional Zoroastrianism, that it can be said without any exaggeration and with the most perfect reason and justice, that a man who believes in reincarnation is no true Zoroastrian...."

5. The Pahlavi Texts pg 41 – 50, tr. by Dastur J.D.M. Jami Ra, Bombay 1897.

The Traditional Funeral Ceremony

Death in the Offering
According to the tradition, a dying person should recite the Patîf prayer together with as many Ashân Vohûns as possible, failing which, a member of the family should recite the aforesaid prayers into the ears of the dying person.

Hooma juice (Guj. Kâm râ pânt) is given to the dying person in order that the soul may gain strength and immortality in the other world. An oil lamp (Guj. divo) must always be kept burning close to the head of the person as it is believed that a short while before death, the soul is timid and begins to hover outside the body.

Immediately upon Death
The prayer vigil should be maintained as the soul is deemed to be frightened and anxious, having been suddenly exposed to another state at the moment of death. The gah prayer, the Patîf Ravân-nâî and the Sraosha Yanhî Vadi are some of the prayers that may be recited before the corpse is given the final ritual bath known in Gujarati as the sachkar. Before the sachkar, both Zoroastrians as well as non-Zoroastrians are traditionally allowed to pay their last respects to the deceased.

The Sachkar: The Final Ritual Bath
This may be given by a member of the household or by professional helpers at the bangîl. Traditionally, the corpse is rubbed down with gaomez (unconsecrated bull’s urine), followed by the washing of the body with luke-warm water.

The genitals of the corpse are covered by a male or female member, as the case may be. The body is dressed in old, white, clean clothes. The krûyâ is finally tied in the usual manner around the waist of the corpse, with the recitation of the basic prayers. The hands of the corpse are crossed across the chest, the face is exposed and the body is covered with an old, clean, white cotton shroud.

Close Zoroastrian friends and relatives of the deceased then bid their private farewells, as thenceforth no one can touch the body except the corpse bearers (nasasalârs).

Heightened Activity of the Corpse Demons
After the sachkar ceremony has been performed, the corpse demons begin to increase in number and in activity, instep of them being ritually contained. "... the body of those passed away is contaminating; the nasu (corpse demon) rushes on it, and owing to its violence . . . puts itself into the place of the body, that body is then for that reason, called nasu (dead matter)." (Dd. 17.7, SBE Vol. 18 p. 39).

In the Vendidad, the corpse demon (nasu) is vividly described. "... then the druj nasu flies away to the regions of the north, in the shape of a raging fly, with knees and tail sticking out, cowering without end, and like unto the foulest khrîstînas (noxious creatures)." (Vd. 7.2 p. 77).

The Role of the Corpse Bearers (Nasasalârs)
The corpse bearers enter the room in patway, connected to each other by a cord, having taken the Bâj of Sraosha. The nasasalârs place the body on three stone slabs, ensuring that the head is not positioned in a northerly direction for it is believed that the corpse demons come from the northern climes.

The nasasalârs then draw a parameter (kashe) thrice around the corpse with a nail or any other metal object; whilst doing so, they recite as many Yathâ Ahi Vairûpas as possible. This practice of creating a demarcated space around the corpse is done in order that the infectious corpse demons may be ritually contained.

1. A place where the final death rituals are performed.

2. The Sraosha Bâj is recited unto the last line of the Kâm râ Masâbi prayer - mîn mîn mîn kâm râ pânti ahuavîvat hatha: "Do not destroy the creation of the righteous corporeal world".
The nasasalaris then complete reciting the remaining portion of the Sraosha Baj, after which they leave the room and once again do their kusti. The body is then ritually ready for the all-important funeral ceremony (Guj. geh sarunu) to take place.

The Interim Period

Often, many hours elapse between the sachkar ritual and the actual funeral ceremony, which can only be performed in the Havan. Rapithwa and Uzerrin gahs. A Zoroastrian funeral should take place only during the daylight hours, as it is believed that the rays of the sun have a strong protective and purifying effect on the afflicted body. “At the time when the sun rises, then the Ahura-created earth becomes pure... the stagnant waters become pure...” (Ny.1.12). At night the corpse is said to become more susceptible to the forces of evil, for “...if the sun were not to rise up then the demons would destroy all (things) which are on the seven regions” (Ny.1.13). It is for this reason that a Zoroastrian funeral service takes place during the daylight hours only.

In the meantime, the prayer vigil over the corpse continues, in order to give sustained protection to the body and soul. A priest or a relative should recite a series of prayers such as the Sraosha Baj, the relevant geh prayer, the Peti Rav-un-ni, the first and second Gathas followed by the Sraosha Yasti Yadi as well as the Sraosha Yasti Hadathkht: or any other prayer connected with the Yasaita Sraosha. If these longer prayers are not known, then the continuous recitation of as many Ahunavars as possible is indeed desirable.

The Sagdidi: “Being Seen by the Dog”

Upon the change of each geh, a sagdidi is done, during which a special dog is brought to cast his eyes upon the corpse. This dog is believed to have four eyes (Vd.8.16) and its gaze is meant to ward off the evil nasu who, it is stated, is frightened away. “...and afterwards when seen by it, the nasu is destroyed by it.” (Shn.sh.2.1). These dogs are also said to have an instinctive ability to detect any form of life in the corpse. The dog is considered to be the best amongst the good creatures for it has the ability to scare the demons. “...this is the good creature among the creatures of the Good Spirit that, from midnight till the sun is up, goes and kills thousands of creatures of the Evil Spirit.” (Vd.13.2).

The dog, man’s best friend, is given special status in Zoroastrian doctrine because its soul is said to have a link between the spiritual and physical worlds. “Then comes the beautiful, well-shaped, strong and well-formed maid (Deena) with the dogs at her sides...” (Vd.19.30).

The Funeral Ceremony

The funeral ceremony in Gujarati is known as the geh sarunu (“chanting the Gathas”). The nasasalaris, having done their respective padiyab-kustis, enter the room in paitwand, after having taken the Baj of Sraosha. In suppressed tones, they recite a formula in accordance with the tradition. The nasasalaris then sit in paitwand on the stone floor, waiting for the priests to come.

Two priests come in paitwand, having done their padiyab-kustis and having recited the Sraosh Baj, the appropriate geh prayer and the Khorsbed and Mehr Nyashees. They stand some distance from the body near the door. They then take the Baj of Sraosha, after which they begin to recite the Ahunavarti Gatha. Upon the recitation of the words yehya vere di verdi varaneh man drujin — “through whose strength we might conquer the Lie” (Y.31.4) — the priest pause for a short while and turn their faces away, a practice which should be

3. The words Khorsbedi Ahunavarti Man Druj are uttered, followed by the Ahsu Vohu prayer. The exposed parts of the body are washed three times and then the kehe-trikun is done.
followed by the ladies as well. During this period another *sudhād* is done, after which the corpse is transferred onto the iron bier by the *nasasātars*.

(The priests turn their faces away, for it is believed that if eye contact takes place between the priests and the corpse demons, then affliction and harm may befall the priests. This risk is further heightened due to the fact that the body at this point is transferred from the stone slabs onto the iron bier, resulting in the disturbance and the possible escape of the ritually contained corpse demons. Hence, the priests as well as the others in the room should turn their faces away in order to remain protected from the evil effects of the *nasus*).

The *nasasātars* either cough or clap to indicate when it is safe for the priests to face the corpse once again, whereupon they continue with the prayers. Upon the completion of the recitation of the first Gāhā, the *Baj* of *Sraosha* is also concluded, bringing to an end the main funeral service.

The *Sezdo*

Upon the completion of the funeral ceremony, the *sezdo* (paying of respect) takes place. Zoroastrian males followed by the invited high priest and then the ladies in the room, all bow to pay their homage to the deceased.

Why are non-Zoroastrians not allowed to pay their respects to the deceased after the *sachkar* ceremony?

As stated earlier, the Zoroastrian viewpoint of death is quite different to that of any other religious system. According to the tradition, death is the work of evil and as such, special precautions by way of ritual purity are to be followed in order to ensure the containment of the corpse demons (*nasus*)

"...the *nasu* rushes upon him to defile him from the nose, eyes, tongue, jaws, sexual organs...making the man unclean henceforth." (Vd. 3.14). "...how shall I fight against that drait who, from the dead, defiles the living...?" (Vd. 9.47).

It is only through the protection afforded by the wearing of the *sudreh* and *kiśiti*, coupled with ritual purity, that the living are safeguarded from being attacked by these demons. If the sacred shirt and girdle are not worn, then it is religiously not advisable to be exposed to the naked aggression of the corpse demons. As non-Zoroastrians cannot wear the *sudreh* and *kiśiti*, it is for their own safety and protection that they have been restricted from participating in the *sezdo*. With the same token, a pregnant Zoroastrian woman is not allowed to participate in the *sezdo*, as the child in her womb is ritually unprotected. Similarly, no *navjoted* child is allowed to attend the *sezdo*, lest the *nasus* in some way afflicts the child.

It is the memory of the deceased that the living pay their respects to, which in no way is lessened by non-Zoroastrians not being allowed to look at the face of the corpse after the *sachkar* ceremony.

The Final Journey

Upon the completion of the *sezdo*, the corpse bearers cover the face of the deceased. The bier is taken out by the *nasasātars* and the other pall-bearers (khandias), who carry it towards the Tower of Silence. The male mourners who wish to pay their final respects near the Tower first take the *Baj* of *Sraosha* in *paīwand* and are then led in a silent procession by the two officiating priests who walk at a distance of thirty paces behind the funeral cortege, also in *paīwand*. Just outside the perimeter of the Tower of Silence, the bier is once again laid to rest upon the stone platform; here, the face is uncovered for the final *sudhād* to take place. The mourners in *paīwand* pay their very last respects before the face is once again covered by the *nasasātars*. The body is then carried by the *nasasātars* to its final resting place in the Tower of Silence, where it is placed with the head positioned in an easterly direction. The
white cotton shroud is partially torn with a nail or hook, after which the body is left behind for the vultures to devour.

Whilst the nasatârs are inside the Tower of Silence, the mourners in paîwand retreat to a vantage point from where they can see the door of the Tower. After the nasatârs come out of the Tower, the mourners complete reciting the Bāj of Sraosha followed by the Daikhma nābmastār. The corpse bearers, upon completing their task, finish reciting the Bāj of Sraosha and return to do their kūstā once again.

The mourners, no longer in paîwand, then proceed to do their pādyāk-kūstās. Upon reciting their kūstās, they pay their respects to the Dādγah fire where, traditionally, the Avesta Aîngish followed by the Pātēr Ravēn-nîr is recited.

After the Funeral

All those who attended the funeral ceremony should take a bath in order that the contamination of the corpse demons may be nullified. An oil lamp should be kept burning continuously for three days and nights in the deceased’s room.

No fresh meat should be eaten by the family members for three days, as the corpse demons are said to pollute uncooked meat during that period. Grief should be kept to a minimum as tears for the dead are a hindrance to the progress and well-being of the soul.

The Yazata Sraosha is propitiated continuously for the next three days, as he is the guardian of all souls as well as the Lord of prayer. “O beautiful holy Sraosha, protect us here in these two lives, in these two worlds, in this world which is material, and in that which is spiritual.” (7.57.25).

For the next four days, a number of religious ceremonies are performed by the living in order to give strength and fortitude to the soul. During this period, the soul anxiously awaits its individual judgement which, we are told, takes place on the dawn of the fourth day after death.

In places where it is not possible for a traditional Zoroastrian funeral service to be conducted or for ancillary prayers to be recited, the local alternatives should be followed, bearing in mind as best as possible the doctrinal injunctions with regards to death. If the four-day death rituals cannot be undertaken due to unavoidable circumstances, then they should be done wherever the facilities are available in order to further the progress of the soul. It is believed that the rituals performed in memory of the dead, assist and protect the soul during the all-important transitional period.

The promise of a hereafter is an important belief in Zoroastrianism, as man learns to sow the seeds of righteousness in this world in order to reap the benefits of eternal happiness and immortality in the House of Song.

Two Thraexes (c. 5th century B.C.)
Appendix I

On the Disposal of the Dead

The Dakhma:

From ancient times the Iranians have used the exposure method as the mode of disposal for their dead. The corpse used to be exposed on high mountain tops to be devoured by birds of prey and wild animals. "...then the worshippers of Mazda shall lay down the dead — his eyes towards the sun." (Vd.5.13). It seems that the Tower of Silence (Av. dakhma) method evolved much later, as there exists no archaeological evidence to indicate the use of such structures in pre-Islamic times.

"In the Zoroastrian tradition it is kvere dareša, or, as it is expressed in Persian, khosro bairān 'beholding the sun', which is stressed as the chief merit of exposure. The sun’s rays, beneficial for the spera creation, are also powerful to burn away the pollutions of the body, which in death belongs to the daevis powers." Great care therefore should be taken to maintain the ritual laws of purity when a Zoroastrian dies, as "...Ahura Mazda answered: ‘those dakhmas that are built upon the face of the earth, O Spitama Zarathushtra, and whereupon are laid the corpse of dead men, that is the place where there are daevias, that is the place whereon troops of daevias rush together and come rushing along...!’" (Vd.7.56). Hence, Zoroastrians are doctrinally not permitted to burn, bury or drown their dead because the elements are considered to be sacred and the corpse is deemed to be contaminated by the corpse demons (nazes).

The corpse is placed in a circular stone structure known as the Tower of Silence where it is exposed to the only unlimited creation the sky which, together with the sun and birds of prey like vultures, quickens the process of decay and decompositions effectively. As a matter of interest, a vulture cannot fly with food in its mouth or talons plus it is believed to have one of the strongest digestive systems in the world. The corpse is eaten by these birds, as well as it is allowed to decompose by the rays of the sun, resulting in a cost-effective, hygienic method of disposal. The big bones that are not eaten by the vultures are exposed to the sun naturally, and so dry up and disintegrate into powder within a short span of time. Inside the Tower of Silence is dug a deep circular pit in hard rock, wherein the powdered remains of the bones are periodically swept.

Critics of this method of disposal seem to have a more favourable attitude towards the burial or cremation method of disposal. Both these systems however, cannot be accepted on the grounds of doctrine if the exposure method is available. The traditional Zoroastrian method of exposure is cheap, hygienic, ecologically sound and above all, an egalitarian mode of disposal whereby the corpse of a rich or poor person is disposed off in exactly the same way with no additional pomp or ceremony. The doctrinal prohibition of the earth or the lessering of the purity of the fire are not compatible with the beliefs and practices of the religion and hence in Zoroastrianism, the exposure method is used in preference to any other mode of disposal. However, if this traditional method is not available, then the prevailing local custom should be followed, bearing in mind as best as possible the doctrinal injunctions of the religion.

4. "Thereupon replied Ohrmazd: ‘After a year’s length, O Holy Zarathushtra, the lands become clean, (where) he men dead that are consigned to the ground enveloped in light, exposed to sun (light).’" (Patavi Vendidad 7.46, tr. by D.T. Anklesaria).

Rituals: A Transcendental Communion

Zoroastrian doctrine is supported and enriched through a legacy of rituals which when properly performed, gives the participant an incontrovertible experience of something meaningful and special. This experience often helps the individual into an awareness and a deeper involvement, in order to realize the power and existence of an intangible dimension which is believed to complement the physical world. The purpose of a Zoroastrian ritual is to generate a conscious awareness, which in turn gives the celebrant an insight into and an understanding of the nature of divinity. The field of ritual practices therefore is a subjective one, open to many interpretations; however, it is founded upon certain common and inherent principles which when correctly enacted, leads one to a mystical experience.

What are Rituals?

Rituals are a set of practices which when enacted in a given prescribed order, become the medium through which a person is able to relate to the unseen spiritual world. It is through a ritual that an individual existentially experiences a link between the physical and spiritual worlds. A ritual also enables one to maintain a continuity of religious experience with the past.

The Role of Man

Man has to:

i. generate a heightened awareness and sensitivity;
ii. be in harmony with the physical, psychological and spiritual worlds;
iii. recognize the inherent qualities of the purity and goodness of God;
iv. invest emotionally and psychologically in a ritual;
v. maintain a continuity by relating to his primordial source;
vi. give pleasure and strength to the spiritual world.

The Role of Priests

The role of priests in the enactment of a ritual goes far beyond the mere recitation of prayers. The priests will be able to generate the ritual power (Per amal) necessary to transpose the physical experience of the ritual into a spiritual reality, only if the recitation of the prayers is accompanied by the right intention balanced with a virtuous mind.

Ritual purity, cleanliness, devotion, dedication and knowledge of the religion when brought together, makes the priest not merely a mobed but a mobedan - mobed.

"...The priest himself, like the surgeon, a skilled and dedicated craftsman, concentrates utterly on the work in hand, the Zoroastrian priest solemnizes the pāv-mahāl services with scrupulous exactness in purity of intention, word and act. Thereafter, what he has consecrated from the vegetable and animal creations he gives as offerings to pure sources.

1. Zoroastrian priests wear a rectangular piece of muslin (patura) which covers the lower part of the face from the nose downwards, in order that no saliva may fall on the sacred fire whilst they pray.
of fire and water. A part may also be consumed by those present as worshippers (who must themselves be wholly clean)...."  

In the Gāthās (Y.33.6) it is stated, "The priest who is just in harmony with truth is the offspring from the best spirit. In consequence of this, he is allied with that (good) thinking by reason of which he has respected to bring to realization his pastoral duties. By reason of this very thinking, O Wise Lord, I am eager for Thy sight and Thy counsel."  

The Role of Rituals  

Rituals give man a basic faith and devotion which, when consciously brought together, may result in a special behavioural pattern within the person. Ritual-oriented religions often inculcate within the members of a community, a sense of acceptance and discipline. Large scale rituals often generate an integrating euphoric quality that binds together the faith and devotion of the participants; for example, an open-air Mass conducted in the Vatican.

The Two Categories of Rituals  

Positive Rituals  

These rituals are enacted through affirmation; for example, ritual practices which encourage man to forge a link between the physical and spiritual worlds, such as the performance of a jashan ceremony.

Negative Rituals  

These rituals are enacted through taboos; for example, customs and practices which are observed through the process of abstinence, such as not eating meat on Bahman rōz Bahman mah.

The Power of Rituals  

In the Spiritual World  

Zoroastrian rituals bring great pleasure, joy and strength to all the spiritual divinities including the fraveshis of the departed ones. "Ya zarostrvanam thva asharnam kahkhaññha as bi-bordi ratmwašca bhaeçoṭi gāthāscha srañvuit."  - "Of the righteous Yazata, I desire to please Thee (Ohrmazd), I dedicate (this libation) to the exalted Lord and he (the zādīr) should chant the Gāthās."  

In the Physical World  

Zoroastrian rituals bring about increased purity, goodness, strength, peace and prosperity within this world, leading to the quicker destruction of Angra Mainyu (Pb.Ahriman) and his legions.

Rituals: "A Magical College"  

Sacredness is the sentiment evoked within man through a conceptual framework which generates reverence and harmony towards an object. This reverence is often contagious in the sense that others notice it. As a result, they show a similar reverential attitude towards the particular object. This state is further heightened through a play of images within a variety...

2. See Mary Boyce, History of Zoroastrianism Vol.1 p 321.  
of mental combinations, which often generates a force and power that the person then projects onto the object itself. It is this experience that gives the individual a feeling of sacredness.

Purity is the inherent quality that reflects the goodness of God in the physical, psychological, and spiritual worlds. In Zoroastrianism, purity is closely linked to the concept of asha—order, truth, and righteousness. It is purity of thought, word, and deed that makes man follow the path of asha. Purity, therefore, is the experiential dimension of truth.

The Three Levels of Purity

Physical Purity
It is the process of washing and cleaning, which in a ritual takes place when the priest makes all the implements (ākār) clean (pāh) and pure (pāy). Physical cleanliness is a part of godliness in the life of a Zoroastrian.

Psychological Purity
It is the recognition of truth for its own sake in the thought, word, and deed process of man. In a ritual it is attained when the priest, with proper dedication and emotional commitment, brings about a feeling of communion and harmony between the seen and unseen worlds.

Spiritual Purity
It is experienced when man harmonizes with the immutable principles which govern the order of both the worlds. It also takes place when, through the ritual, the priest is able to forge a conscious link with divinity whereby the presence of the spiritual world is felt by the participant.

Symbolism: A Representation of Reality
Symbolism is the vehicle through which man learns to experience a subtler dimension of reality by means of a variety of physical representations that reflect a multitude of existential image patterns. A symbol represents a quality or an attribute which transcends the obvious physical appearance of the object itself. Within the religious symbolism of a ritual is incorporated the prescribed order that exists in the universe. This order becomes dynamic when it is transposed into a discernible psychological state, resulting in the experience of the inherent qualities of God during the performance of a ritual.

Spenta Māthra: The Holy Word
The strength of the word is said to emerge from the world of thought, while the power of the word manifests through the deed. A word rightly uttered is believed to generate harmony in both the spiritual as well as the physical worlds.

In a ritual, a string of holy words generates a special power (amul) which forms an intangible barrier. This barrier may be likened to a kind of “prayer pavi” which shields the celebrant from evil influences. “The faithful one who pronounces most words of blessing is the most victorious in victory; the Māthra Spenta takes best the unseen druj away.” (Y. 11.3)

For a ritual to be successful, there needs to be the right intention which allows the words to generate the ritual power (amul) that brings together a perfect balance between the seen and unseen worlds.

The Purification Rituals
Purification is a process through which a person ritually cleanses himself in order to be consciously pure in body and soul.

The Pādya-kusti Ritual
This ritual is the first stage of purification that a Zoroastrian often undergoes. The person recites the formula “KshnoMōthra Ahurahē Mazdā” (Glory be to Ahura Mazda), followed by the recitation of one Ashem Vohu. Next,
the person physically ablutes by washing the exposed parts of the body thrice. He then dries himself with a clean towel.

The individual next recites the Kēm nā Mazda prayer which ends with the recitation of one Ashem Vohū. After this, the kūštī (sacred girdle) is untied and then retied with the recitation of the Ahuramazda Khodāī prayer followed by a formula of two Ahunavars and one Ashem Vohū.

Finally, the celebrant recites the Pravarāne, commonly known as Jasa mē avanghe Mazda. Upon the recitation of this prayer, the pādyāb-kūštī is complete.

The Nāhna Ritual
The nāhna ritual is administered by a priest on any auspicious occasion, when the celebrant chooses to undergo a process of purification which is deemed to bring down the blessings and strength from the divine world.

The purification ceremony begins with both the priest and celebrant doing their respective pādyāb-kūštīs. Three pomegranate leaves are placed in the right-hand palm of the celebrant, who in an intoned voice is made to recite a short prayer known in Gujarati as the Jamvānī Bāj, which in translation reads, "Here then, we worship Ahura Mazda who created (both) the cattle and the corn. He created the waters and the good plants. He created the lights and the earth and all (that is) good". This recitation is followed by three Ashem Vohūs after which the celebrant chews the pomegranate leaves. The leaves are part of the plant world, and therefore are deemed to symbolize the principle of immortality (Ameretāt).

The third part of the nāhna ritual, commonly referred to in Gujarati as the Nirang Pīvānī Bāj, is performed thrice. Here the celebrant is made to recite in an intoned voice a short prayer which in translation reads, "I drink this for the holiness of the body and for the purity of the soul". At the end of this prayer the person is made to sip nirang (a consecrated potion), the properties of which are deemed to be miraculous. Each sip of this sacred potion is believed to help towards the internal spiritual catharsis of thought, word and deed—an important requisite for the purpose of ritual purification.

Next, the priest and the celebrant recite aloud four Ashem Vohūs and two Yathā Aḥu Vaiṣya followed by another Ashem Vohū, making a total of seven short invocations.
These seven prayers may be likened to the seven Amesha Spenta, whose blessings are sought by both the priest and the celebrant. They next recite the last part of the Sravaḥ Bāj which includes the Ahmād Rāscha, Hazanghren, Jasa mē avanghe Māzda and the Kērēh Mōzd prayers. The person once again silently unites the kūstī and ties it promptly, as a gesture of reaffirmation and commitment to the religion of Zarathushtra.

The celebrant then stands at the threshold of the bathroom door, whereupon a lady member of the household performs a curious ritual. She takes an egg in her right hand and rotates it seven times in a clockwise manner over the person’s head. The egg is then broken on a stone placed to the right of the celebrant’s feet.

What might the symbolism be as gleaned from the oral tradition?

The egg is held to be a symbol of fertility and life. The clockwise rotational gesture over the head of the person is believed to have a twofold ritual significance. First, like a corkscrew, the clockwise rotational gesture moves downwards as this act is deemed to generate an energy which permeates into the celebrant; secondly, this movement symbolizes the transmission and penetration of the intrinsic goodness of the egg from the spiritual world into the psychological world in which the ritual experience should be felt by the celebrant. The seven rotations are symbolic of the seven Bounteous Immortals (Amesha Spenta) who represent the seven key attributes of Ahura Mazda, as well as they are the guardians of the seven physical creations in this world. The heptad of these Bounteous Immortals is ritually invoked in order that they may symbolically penetrate the body of the celebrant through the rotational gesture. Upon the goodness of the egg having ritually entered into the person, what remain are the dregs and hence the egg is cast down and broken.

The kūstī is once again united and the sudreh (sacred undershirt), together with the other clothes, is taken off as the celebrant is about to take the important ritual bath. The priest standing outside, then recites the Sravaḥ Bāj up to the words “...astavaliş ashkhe.” He knocks on the door and according to his earlier instructions, the celebrant rubs a drop or two of nirang all over the body. This is done three times after which a mixture of milk and rose petals is rubbed onto the body. Finally the body is washed clean with fresh well-water thereby completing the process of physical purification. The spiritual and psychological purifications were undergone earlier through the processes of chewing the pomegranate leaves and sipping the nirang. The milk and rose petals are symbolic reminders of the well-being and beauty in God’s wonderful world.

The celebrant then emerges from the bathroom in a state of ritual purity, after which the priest completes reciting the remaining portion of the Sravaḥ Bāj and then proceeds to recite the Paēd Pashēmān prayer. Meanwhile, the celebrant once again unites the kūstī bringing the māhn ritual to a conclusion.

Upon the enactment of this ceremony, the person undergoes:

i. Spiritual purification through the chewing of pomegranate leaves;
ii. Psychological purification through the sipping of nirang;
iii. Physical purification through the ritual bath.

The Barahshnom Ritual

This ritual ablation is the highest form of purification in Zoroastrianism. It is administered when a priest or a beka in (member of the laity) is deemed to be rīman (unclean).

The purification necessitates the services of two priests. The ritual bath is undertaken by

5. All the prayers of the māhn ritual, if known, may be recited by the celebrant jointly with the priest.
the participant in an enclosed open-air court-
yard. The segregation and purification cere-
mony lasts for nine days and nights during
which stringent laws of purity and self dis-

The *barashnom* is a necessary pre-requisite for
a priest to be able to perform the inner high
rituals of the Zoroastrian tradition. In Iran,
both the priests and the *behathis* are allowed to
take the *barashnom*. In India, however, the
*barashnom* is generally administered only to
members of the priestly class.

The importance of rituals lies in the fact that
the celebrant is given the vehicle to experience
the majesty and glory of God through a sense
of devotion and reverence. Critics of religious
rituals often fail to realize the emotional
benefit that accrues when a ritual is properly
enacted. Therefore, to reject rituals on the
grounds that they are not to be found in the
prophet's utterances, or to change the form of
the rituals as is often done today, are both self-
defeating points of view. In the former case, a
Zoroastrian foregoes the religious experiential
dimension that otherwise would be generated,
while in the latter, this potential experience
itself is undoubtedly curtailed by the arbitrary
change in the format of the ritual. A practicing
Zoroastrian thus, is the one who blends the
best of both dimensions by first understanding
the doctrine and then allowing an integration
of it to be ritually experienced.

*A Persian holding barasnom rods (7th-6th century B.C.)*
The Jashan Ceremony

Jashan: A Communication and Thanksgiving

A jashan is a thanksgiving ceremony performed by two or more priests; the officiating priest is known as the zootar and his assistant is called the raspi.

A jashan is enacted for the well-being of both the spiritual and physical worlds in which the living offer thanks, and ask for blessings from the spiritual world.

In a jashan ritual all the seven Aŋua Spentas are invoked in order that they may proffer their blessings. The seven Bounteous Immortals are the guardians of the seven creations which are symbolically represented by the materials and implements (Ar. ātār) used in the jashan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kshathra Vairya</th>
<th>Sky — the first creation</th>
<th>represented by all the metallic implements.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haurvatāt</td>
<td>Water — the second creation</td>
<td>represented by the fresh water in the beaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spenta Ārmaiti</td>
<td>Earth — the third creation</td>
<td>represented by the demarcated area over which the ritual is performed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amentāt</td>
<td>Plants — the fourth creation</td>
<td>represented by the flowers, fruits and wood offered in the ritual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vohu Manah</td>
<td>Cattle — the fifth creation</td>
<td>represented by the milk offered in the ritual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spenta Mainyu</td>
<td>Man — the sixth creation</td>
<td>represented by both the priests, the zootar and raspi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asha Vahishta</td>
<td>Fire — the seventh creation</td>
<td>represented by the continuously burning sandalwood on the fire-vase (Guj. ajarganyu).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Bounteous Immortals, along with the daru of the departed righteous souls, are ritually invited down to grace the jashan. The Aŋua Spentas are also responsible for the ethical structure within man. This realization is further strengthened through the enactment of the ritual, which brings together the concrete and the abstract dimensions through the medium of ritual power (aumāl).

The flowers are kept in the lower left half of the tray. They are placed in a set prescribed order, in two vertical rows of four flowers each. The first two flowers are placed vertically with the stalks pointing towards the zootar, while the remaining six flowers are positioned with their respective stalks pointing sideways. During the jashan ritual, the flowers are exchanged three times between the zootar and

An Achaemenian vase (6th century B.C.)

The fruits are washed, partially cut and placed on the right half of the tray. This is done so that the guests from the spiritual world may sample the freshness and essence of the fruits. In the upper left half of the tray a beaker of water is placed; next to it is placed a glass of milk, with a beaker of wine or sherbet as well.
THE JASHAN LAYOUT
raspi. Thus in all, twenty-four flowers are used in the ceremony. A tray containing the additional sixteen flowers is placed to the right of the officiating priest.

The afarganyu is placed centrally between the zoatar and raspi. To the right of the zoatar, near the afarganyu, the traditional oil lamp (Guj, divo) is kept burning. To the right of the raspi is placed the tray of sandalwood and frankincense (loban) which are offered to the fire on a flat circular spoon known as the chamach. The zoatar uses a pair of tongs called the chipyo.

The Three Parts of a Jashan

A jashan is usually enacted in three main parts during which three Yazatas are propitiated.

The priests first stand and recite the Atash Nyaish and the Dasa Namin Stayishi prayers. The zoatar then recites the first ahriman (blessing) which is dedicated to Ohrmazd. Next, the zoatar recites a dibache (portion) in Farsi, which lays out the general spirit and tone of the jashan. The zoatar and the raspi then together chant ten Yaath Ahi Vairys and three Ashem Vohis.

Next, the Fravardin (“The Articles of the Faith”) is recited in Avestan, followed by the appropriate gath prayer and the small Khshniman (blessing.invocation) of Ohrmazd. Both the priests then recite the large Khshniman of Ohrmazd, followed by the recitation of kardo 13 (Y.13, 49 - 52) in which the Fravashis of the righteous are invoked.

The zoatar then picks up the first two flowers whilst three Ashem Vohis are recited by both the priests and he gives one flower to the raspi, who stands up to receive it at the end of the third Ashem Vohi. The raspi once more recites the small Khshniman of Ohrmazd and is joined by the zoatar on the word “Afrinami” (I bless). They then begin to pray a portion from the Afrinam of Dahman. Upon the completion of this prayer, an exchange of the two flowers takes place between the zoatar and raspi. The two flowers are said to represent symbolically the Spirit of God (Spenta Manjyu) in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

Both the priests then recite the second verse of Yasna 35 and upon the words “humatanam, hikhtenam, hvarshatanam”, three flowers are given to the raspi by the zoatar, from the upper right-hand column moving downwards. This verse is repeated once more and three more flowers are given to the raspi, this time from the lower left-hand column moving upwards.

According to the oral tradition, the first set of flowers is believed to represent:
Vohu Manah (good mind)
Ashah Vahistah (best truth) and
Khshathra Vairya (desirable kingdom).

The second set of flowers is said to represent:
Spenta Armaiti (holy devotion)
Haurvatat (perfection) and
Ameratat (immortality).

The raspi thus has seven flowers in his hand, representing the attributes of the seven Holy Immortals. Towards the end of the second recitation of the prayer (Yasna 35), the raspi (standing) transfers the ladle from his left to the right hand, making sure that the ladle is in contact with the afarganyu. In doing so, he completes the circuit between himself and the fire.

The zoatar, in his right hand, holds the tongs with which he touches the afarganyu; simultaneously with his left hand, he touches the tray of fruits which are to be consecrated. The ritual circuit is thereby completed by both the priests touching the afarganyu upon which burns the fire. At this point of the ritual the raspi represents the pillar of doctrine, whilst the zoatar is deemed to represent the pillar of
practice. The zaotar is like the ritual alchemist through whom the power from the spiritual world descends, in order that the consecration of the fruits, water, milk and wine may indeed be possible.

The prayers are then intoned in a suppressed voice by both the priests, as they are in the process of reciting a Pahlavi prayer juxtaposed between two Avestan sections. Upon the completion of the bâj, both the priests recite aloud the Yathâ Aûh Vairyô. As this is being done, the zaotar touches four points of the circular water-pot with his tongs, in an up-down right-left action and then touches the ofarganyê to complete the circuit. He next recites one Ashem Vohû and whilst doing so, he touches the same pot of water at four points in a clockwise manner. He then skims over the fruit offerings with his tongs and finally offers the "ritual energy" back to the fire.

The symbolism of the gestures is rather interesting. According to the oral tradition, the up-down right-left action followed by the circular motion made by the zaotar with his tongs over the water pot is seen to be the traditional method through which a vortex of “consecrating energy” is generated via the water. Through this gesture, it is believed that the spirits descend and bless the food offerings placed in the tray.

Next, the raspi hands back the seven flowers to the zaotar. They both recite the Yathâ Aûh Vairyô twice, followed by the small Khshnâman of Ohrmazd and one Ashem Vohû. A ritual handshake known as the hamator is done by the priests whilst they are praying intoned in bâj. An exchange of energy takes place through this ritual handshake which unites the priests in strength. The raspi then sits down and both the priests begin to chant from Yasna 35.2 onwards.

The second ofrûngan is intoned as it is a Pahlavi prayer juxtaposed between two Avestan portions. This ofrûngan of the jashan is dedicated to Dåhman (pious beings, co-workers for the day). The zaotar recites two Yathâ Aûh Vairyôs and three Ashem Vohûs in honour of Dåhman.

The third ofrûngan of the jashan is dedicated to Sraosh, the Lord of Prayer. The structure of the ritual remains the same but the formulae of prayers vary accordingly, for the second and third ofrûngans.

The Three ofrûns

On the completion of the last ofrûngan, three ofrûns or blessings are recited. The first blessing is dedicated to the righteous frawâhûs, the second ofrûn is dedicated to the noble ones, and the third ofrûn is dedicated to the seven Ameša Spêntas. Basically, all these three short blessings are triumphant invocations directed towards the spiritual world.

The zaotar and the raspi next recite twenty-one Yathâ Aûh Vairyôs and twelve Ashem Vohûs, followed by the Ahmad Râché, the Hazanghrem, Jasa mî avangh Mazdá and the Kôrfeh Môsd prayers. Finally, the Dûn Tan-Dûristi prayer is recited for the health and well-being of the community as well as especially for the good health, happiness and prosperity of the family members who arranged and paid for the jashan ceremony.

The jashan therefore, is a ceremony in which man learns to experience the doctrine which in turn is brought alive through the symbolism of the ritual, as well as through the active participation of the priests and the celebrants. A realization of this, together with the readiness of wanting to communicate with the spiritual world, is triumphantly brought about through the proper enactment of the jashan ritual.

1. The mode of praying in an intoned voice is known as bâj.

2. The term Dåhman is commonly mistaken for the Mid Yûsûn, Dåhman.
The Navjote: A Zoroastrian Initiation

Navjote: The New Initiate of the Faith

The navjote ceremony is the initiation of a child into the Zoroastrian faith. During the ceremony the child is invested with the sacred undershirt (sudreh) and a special cord (kusti). Upon being initiated, the young Zoroastrian bears a moral responsibility as well as a duty towards the upholding of the doctrine and principles of the Zoroastrian religion. The navjote of a child is usually performed between the ages of seven and eleven years. On the day of the navjote, the child is made to undergo the nahan ceremony in order to be in a state of ritual purity before the initiation.

The Journey Begins

The child sits facing east on a low wooden stool (Gujja) placed on the stage, and opposite him sits the officiating priest amongst at least four other priests who are invited to invoke blessings upon the child.

The sudreh is placed in the child's hands and all the priests then begin to recite the Yatho Ahuv Vajrā prayer. Next, the officiating priest alone recites the Paeti Raskadam up to the words geti mhnānī and immediately upon the words biću avākshār, the other priests join in to recite the remaining portion of the Paeti prayer. During this period the child is expected to pray as many Ahunaves as possible. The parents as well as the immediate family members of the child should also try and religiously participate in the ceremony by reciting additional prayers for the well-being of the child.

Sudreh: The Advantageous Path

The officiating priest and the child both stand up on the stage and face each other for the investiture ceremony. The sudreh is placed in an easy-to-wear position upon the child's hands which are held by the priest in order to maintain the all important ritual connection known as pañwar. The priest leads the child in prayer and they both chant the Din yu Kohnā, "Confession of the Faith".

Next, both the priest and child together recite one Ahunavat and upon the word siyouth Kāmān, the priest ceremoniously makes the celebrant wear the sacred sudreh. The child is thus invested with the "garment of the good mind" which, it is believed, protects the wearer from extraneous evil influences.

Kūste: The Direction Finder

The officiating priest positions himself behind the child so that they both face the same direction as the resplendent sun. The priest holds the mid-point of the kūste in his left hand and the remaining length of the cord passes between the thumb and index finger of his right hand with the two ends of the kūste hanging down loosely. The priest then recites aloud the preliminary portion of the Ohrmazed Yashī, followed by the small Kshnoōm of Ohrmazed, "Unto Ahura Mazda (who is) illustrious and glorious". He further invokes, "May satisfaction be for the worship, praise, contentment and fame. May the desirable ahun, the chief priest, speak to me; as the truthful learned judge rvīru in accordance with righteousness made known to me".

Next, both the priest and child (still in pañwar) begin to recite aloud the Ahuramazda Khōdāt (Kūste Bastan) prayer. Upon the words manashī, gavashtī, kumashī the priest, holding the kūste together with the child, makes two loops which are inter-connected. According to the oral tradition, the symbolism of this gesture is to remind the initiate of the two worlds, the physical and spiritual which are interdependent upon each other. Upon the words Kshnoōmeh Ahurahē Mazdā, the priest encircles the kūste twice around the child's waist and proceeds to complete the remaining portion of the Ahuramazda Khōdāt prayer.

The priest and child next recite two Yatho Ahuv Vajrās in the course of which the
The child, as a newly confirmed initiate, next declares an oath of allegiance to the religion by reciting the Fravarâne in unison with the officiating priest. Thenceforth, the child is spiritually responsible for every thought, word and deed generated as he is endowed with a religious identity of his own. The tying of the kâstîf may be likened to a ritual covenant that a Zoroastrian makes before God.

In the Fravarâne, the child firmly affirms an allegiance specifically to the Zoroastrian religion, for he declares, "...which, of all the religions that have flourished and are likely to flourish, is the greatest, the best, the most excellent, and which is the religion given by Ahura Mazda to Zarathushtra. To Ahura Mazda I ascribe all good. This is the profession of the Mazda-worshipping religion." Both the officiating priest and child then sit down, whereupon the priest in a suppressed tone prays a benediction from Yasna 12.

Dôa Tan-Dôrâsî: The Final Blessing

The officiating priest once again stands up and gives the final benediction for the health, wealth and well-being of the child by reciting the Dôa Tan-Dôrâsî prayer; whilst doing so he periodically showers grains of rice upon the child’s head, as a symbolic gesture to ensure prosperity and plenty in the life of the newly initiated Zoroastrian.

Upon the completion of this prayer by the officiating priest, the other priests recite aloud the Dôa Tan-Dôrâsî once again, for the well-being of the child’s parents or those who chose to sponsor the navjote. At the end of the ceremony, the priests are given a monetary gift as a token of appreciation for their services.
Additional Points to Bear in Mind

1. Why do the Zoroastrians wear the *sudreh* and *küstā*?

   “To wear the *sudreh* and *küstā* is an outward sign of being a Zoroastrian. To wear a cord as a sign of membership is an Indo-Iranian custom for men, developed in Zoroastrianism for women as well.” (Per. Riv. p. 23).

   It is stated that moving around without a *sudreh* and *küstā* is considered to be a sin. It is construed to be “walking around naked” (Ph. wishūd dwārīshnāt). (Shns. 4.6).

   “At night when they lie down, the shirt and girdle are to be worn, for they are more protecting for the body and good for the soul.” (Shns. 4.13).

   “A token and sign of worship is of great use, and a great assistance therein is this belt which is called *küstā*; that is tied on the middle of the body.” (Dd.39.7, SBE Vol.18 p 124). Evil is driven away when the girdle girds the body. A protection envelops around the human being.

   He who wears the *küstā* is “...wise and is reminded of the Creator...thereby the power of the demons is more shattered, the way to sin becomes more obstructed, and the will of the demons greatly lessened.” (Dd.39.20, Per. Riv. p 24).

2. What should the *sudreh* be made of?

   The *sudreh* should be made of a natural vegetable fibre like cotton. Silk, brocade or hide are not appropriate materials. (Ytrangistān p 163b - 164a, Shns. 4.4 - 8, 10.1).

3. What should the *küstā* be made of?

   The *küstā* may be made of the wool of a goat, or the hair of a camel. It cannot be made of any synthetic fibre, nor of silk or brocade. (Ytrangistān p 163b - 164a, Shns. 4.4 - 8, 10.1).

4. Which direction should one face whilst doing the *küstā*?

   When doing the *küstā*, one should face the direction of the sun, moon or a lamp. If performed at twelve noon, or in darkness, one should turn south - the direction of the abode of Rapithwin, the Lord of Ideal Time. (Per. Riv. p 28).

5. How should the *küstā* be tied?

   The *küstā* should be tied around the waist over the *sudreh*, or one is not regarded as a soldier of God. It is a sin to walk around without a *küstā*. The *küstā* must be tied over the *sudreh*, in order that the direction finder may be symbolically guided by the garment of the good mind. (Per. Riv. p 23).

   The *küstā* should be three fingers loose around the waist; the *sudreh* should be four fingers loose on either side. (Shns. 4.2, 5).

6. The symbolism of the *sudreh*

   The *sudreh* should be white, as white represents purity of thought and so influences the mind to be good. “...the shirt is needful to be perfectly pure white and single,...” The *sudreh* should be of one fold, “...because Vohu Manah also is thus the one creature who was first...” (Dd. 40.2, SBE Vol.18 p 133).

   The *sudreh* symbolically helps man to tap two types of wisdom:

   i) **Instinctive wisdom** (Av. ānān khratu)

   ii) **Acquired wisdom** (Av. gauchī srāta khratu).

   The *sudreh* being made of cotton fibre, represents the plant world; whilst the *küstā* being woven from wool, represents the animal world.
The nine parts of the *sudreh* (advantageous path) may be seen to represent symbolically the 9000 year *Gumēzishn* period which every Zoroastrian, allegorically, is deemed to live. It is within this period that man experiences the processes of birth and growth, which will eventually result in the cumulative creative evolution of mankind.

The front of the *sudreh* represents the past that a Zoroastrian has lived and experienced. The back of the *sudreh* represents the future which a Zoroastrian is going to experience while man, the wearer, represents the present as he is symbolically juxtaposed between the past and the future.

1, 2 – side seams 
3, 4 – sleeve seams 
5 – neck seam 
6 – *girdo* – the storehouse of potential good deeds 
7 – *girehban* – the pocket of good deeds 
8 – straight *tiri* – the reminder of imperfection in the physical world 
9 – triangular *tiri* – converging to a point 

A – front of the *sudreh* 
B – back of the *sudreh*

2. The symbolism of the *sudreh* has been compiled through the information gleaned from the oral tradition.
7. The symbolism of the kūstī

The kūstī symbolizes the girding of all that is good. "...all its luminaries are girded by the girdles, as the girdle of the omniscient Wisdom has girded the all-intelligent angels." (Dd.39, SBE Vol.18 p 126).

"The belt should remind one of the purity of thought, whose dwelling is the heart...." (Dd.39, SBE Vol.18 p 125). Purity of word and deed follows, if one remembers the significance of the girdle all the time.

The girdle is tied over the garment of Vohu Manah whose source, it is believed, is derived from Wisdom. (Dd.39, SBE Vol.18 p 128).

The kūstī is encircled thrice around the waist, symbolically reminding a Zoroastrian to generate good thoughts, words and deeds at all times.

According to the oral tradition, the symbolism of the woven kūstī is as follows:

i) The 72 strands from which the kūstī is woven, represent the 72 chapters of the Yasna.

ii) The 6 sections (of 12 strands each) represent the 6 Amesha Spentas. (The Bounteous Spirit, who heads the heaven of the Amesha Spentas, dwells in man).

iii) The 12 strands represent the 12 months of the year, as well as the 12 words of the Ashem Vohu prayer.

iv) The 6 tassels (3 at each end) represent the 6 Cahtāmōrs linked to the 6 creations of God. (Fire, the 7th creation, is linked to the festival of Nōrōz).

v) The 24 strands in each tassel end represent the 24 chapters of the Vīsperad, "All the Lords".

vi) The hollow kūstī represents the two worlds—the physical and the spiritual.
Marriage: A Zoroastrian Sacrament

Marriage is considered to be a divinely ordained event in the life of a Zoroastrian for it is said that God revealed to Zarathushtra, that not only is marriage a righteous act but it is a commitment which makes even the earth feel joyous and happy (Vd.3.2 SBE Vol.4 p 23). The nuptial bond is seen as both a contract as well as a sacrament which, when enacted through the marriage ritual, brings together a union between the couple in both the physical and spiritual worlds. Thus marriage in Zoroastrianism is a religious duty to be undertaken by the priests as well as the laity. "Verily I say it unto thee, O Spitama Zarathushtra, the man who has a wife is far above him who lives in celibacy..." (Vd.4.47 SBE Vol.4 p 46).

Highlights of the Marriage Ceremony

The marriage ceremony may be divided into four parts:

1. The Nāhñ Ritual.
2. The Achi Michun Ritual.
3. The Hathēvō Ritual.
4. The Marriage Ritual.

The Nāhñ Ritual

Before the commencement of the actual wedding ceremony, both the bride and groom undergo a process of purification (nāhñ) which ritually cleanses and prepares them to receive the blessings and strength from the divine world. After the nāhñ ceremony is completed, the couple is said to be ritually ready to be wedded by the priests. Thereafter, both the bride and groom dress ceremonially in their respective traditional attire.

1. Traditionally, the word is spelled as Achi Michun.
2. According to custom, the groom wears a traditional Persian white overcoat (degfr) and a pair of white trousers. He also puts on a specially designed hat (Guj. pahgal or feteh). The bride is usually dressed in a white sari with silver or gold embroidery woven into it. She also partially covers her head with part of the sari draped over it (Guj. sare). In Zoroastrianism, the colour white is regarded as a symbol of purity and hence its importance on all ritualistic occasions. Traditionally, the jewellery worn by the bride is given to her by the groom's parents.
The *Achu Michu* Ritual

The lady members of the respective families carry two silver salvers (*Guj. *sej*) which are of particular interest, as contained in them are items of ritual importance.

The first tray (*Achu Michu*) contains:

**Items**
- Egg
- Betel leaf and areca nut (*Guj. pan-sohara*)
- Unshelled almond (*Guj. badam*)
- Sugar crystal or sugar biscuit (*Guj. bahasa*)
- Dried date (*Guj. kharak*)
- Coconut
- Dry rice
- Rose petals
- A beaker of water

**Intrinsically symbolic of**
- The life giving force
- Suppleness and strength
- Virtue
- Sweetness
- Resilience
- The inner and outer worlds
- Abundance
- Joy
- Purity, perfection

The second tray contains:

**Items**
- Silver cone (*Guj. sapat*)
- Sprinkler (*Guj. golabdan*)
- Vermillion container (*Guj. pigani*)
- Sugar crystals or sugar biscuits
- Green leaves
- Grains of rice or wheat
- Pomegranate
- Pistachio nuts
- Silver and gold coins
- Coconut
- Garland of flowers

**Intrinsically symbolic of**
- The allegorical mountain of sweetness from which the good spirits are believed to descend
- The receptacle of happiness
- The receptacle of holiness
- Sweetness
- Nourishment
- Abundance
- Immortality
- Firmness
- Wealth
- The inner and outer worlds
- Joy

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1, 4. Information about the items used and the symbolism thereof have been gleaned from the oral tradition.
Prior to the Āchu Michu ritual, the groom, his witness and the priest, all do their respective kāstīs in order to remind themselves of their commitment and allegiance to the Zoroastrian tradition. Upon the completion of the kāstī, the groom stands beside the stage whilst the bride’s mother faces him and performs the Āchu Michu ritual which is believed to be of Indian origin. First, she takes an egg in her right hand from the Āchu Michu tray and rotates it seven times in a clockwise manner over the groom’s head; she then breaks the egg on a stone placed to the right of the groom’s feet.

The clockwise rotational gesture over the head of a person is believed to have a two-fold significance. First, the clockwise gesture is deemed to generate an energy which permeates into the celebrant. Secondly, this movement ensures the symbolic penetration and transmission of the intrinsic goodness of each item used, from the spiritual into the psychological world in which the ritual experience should be felt by the participant. The seven rotations are symbolic of the seven Bounteous Immortals who represent the key attributes of God, and who are deemed to be the guardians of the seven physical creations in this world. The heptad of the Bounteous Immortals is ritually invoked in order that they may enter the body of the celebrant through this rotational gesture. Upon the symbolic goodness of the various items having ritually entered into the person, what remain are the dregs and hence the items used are either broken or cast down to the right and left of the groom’s feet.

Next, the bridegroom’s mother takes the betel leaf, areca nut, dried date, almond and sugar crystal, all together in her right hand and the same rotational procedure is followed as before. Thirdly, the coconut is rotated over the groom’s head and it is then broken on the stone placed to the right of his feet. Afterwards, a few grains of rice and rose petals are taken out of the tray and the remaining rice and rose petals are wetted in the tray, which is then rotated over the groom’s head as done earlier with the other items. The mixture is then cast down to the left and right of the groom’s feet. The handful of dry rice is finally showered over the groom as a token of invoking blessings. The groom is then garlanded and given a fresh coconut to hold. A vertical mark with vermilion powder is made in the centre of his forehead. The red pigment is symbolic of the sacrificial blood that was shed by the ancient Indo-Iranians as an act deemed to represent the well-being and spiritual sustenance of their souls. The groom then steps onto the stage with his right foot and awaits the arrival of his bride.

The bride also goes through the same ritual procedures as undergone earlier by the groom. Upon the completion of all the preliminary rituals, the bride steps onto the stage and sits opposite her husband-to-be, ready for the solemn yet joyous marriage ceremony to begin. The priests, respective witnesses and close family members, all stand on the stage which is bedecked with flowers, lights and other decorations. A traditional oil lamp as well as an incense burner are kept burning to add to the religiosity of the ceremony.

The Hathiṇāro Ritual

In this part of the marriage ritual a cotton sheet is held vertically between the bride and groom by the witnesses and other family members standing on the stage. The officiating priest then takes the right hand of the groom and makes him hold the right hand of the bride, under the vertically held cotton sheet.

The priest then winds a cotton thread three times around the clasped hands of the couple and gives them a handful of rice to hold in their respective left hands. The hand clasp of the couple, bound by the thread, is a symbolic gesture of the promise and commitment that

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5. The giving of dry rice over a person is the usual Zoroastrian practice of ritually invoking blessings on all auspicious occasions.
the bride and groom have volitionally chosen
to make to each other. The thread wound three
times over their hands represents their allegiance
to be compatible in thought, word and deed. The officiating priest then begins the
invocation by chanting the following words:

Ba nìme yazd bakhshayande bakhshayashgar meherbàn......

In the name of the Lord, (who is) benevolent, the giver of blessings and the
bestower of kindness......

The prayers continue as the priest invokes
blessings upon the couple for the virtues of
righteousness, victory over enemies, strength,
wisdom, good health and for a happy married
life. The same thread which was wound around
the couple’s clasped hands is then wound seven
times around their chairs in a clockwise
manner, whilst the priests chant one Akhuavat
for each encirclement. By this act of encirclement,a consecrated area is created naturally in
order to generate greater spiritual togetherness
between both the bride and groom. Upon the
completion of the seventh Akhuavat, the
cotton sheet between the couple is removed
and almost instantly the rice held by the bride
and groom is thrown at each other. The
removal of the cotton sheet signifies that the
separation that hitherto existed between the
couple no longer exists, as they are in the
process of being united in marriage. The officiating
priest then gathers together the seven
threads and ties a knot around them. The knot
symbolizes the interdependence and
harmony reflected within the seven creations of
God. Next, smouldering frankincense in the
incense burner is brought to the couple as a
gesture to remind them to extend an invitation
to the spirits of their ancestors who, it is
believed, continue to maintain a link with
those living in the physical world. The bride’s
chair is swivelled around in order that she then
sits alongside the groom, facing east.

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6. The one who throws the rice first is believed to win
the race of love.

The Marriage Ritual

The all-important marriage benediction (Guj.
Ashirwad) is then recited. The two priests
stand before the couple and the officiating
priest invokes the blessings of the Wise Lord,
Ahura Mazda. He chants, “May the Creator,
the Omniscient Lord, grant upon thee, pro-
geny of sons, and grandsons, plenty of means
to provide yourselves with heart ravishing
friendship, bodily strength, long life and an
existence of a hundred and fifty years...”

During the ceremony, the priest asks the wit-
nesses as well as the couple to confirm that the
nuptial bond is taking place with their accept-
ance and consent. Throughout the invocation,
the couple is showered with rice at short
intervals as a symbolic gesture to enhance the
health, wealth and harmony between the
couple. The bride and groom are urged to lead
a righteous life in order to be happy, for ever-
lasting happiness is promised to the person
who recognizes and affirms the highest truth
for its own sake. Upon the completion of the
main benediction, the Ashirwad is repeated in
Sanskrit. This ancillary convention developed
in India where the marriage benediction was
translated into Sanskrit in order to enable the
learned of the land to follow and participate in
the ceremony.

The marriage ritual ends with a final short
benediction known as the Dōa Tan-Dōrōsī in
which the priests ask for happiness, virtue,
wealth, good health and a long wedded life to
be bestowed upon the couple. Upon the
completion of the formal wedding ceremony,
the bride and groom exchange rings. The
marriage is solemnized once again in the last
night watch (Ushaṅi gāth) of the same day.

Before the marriage, the bride and groom were
two people living their own separate individual
lives. After the marriage, they become united
through the sacred nuptial bond and are on
the verge of beginning a new life together. It is
appropriate then that this ceremony should be
repeated in the last watch of the day so that the
bride and groom wake up to herald the dawn
of a new life as husband and wife.
Prayer: A Vehicle of Communication

The Avestan term for the holy word is *spenta maintha*, and a string of *maintha* forms a series of formulated utterances known as *Yasna* (prayer).

Prayer enables man to gain access to a subtler dimension of reality, a dimension that takes man beyond the sensate, tangible state. In other words prayer is a medium or vehicle of communication between the seen and unseen worlds. Through prayer man is able to recognize the inexplicable harmony of the three worlds — the physical, psychological and spiritual. "...And let us send forth in our liturgies between the heaven and earth, the Holy good prayer of the righteous man for blessings." (Y.61.1).

Formulated Utterances: Their Need

In Zoroastrianism it is through the repeated utterance of the holy words that man is fortified to fight evil. "He wishes O Wise Lord, to recite hymns of praise for us and for the truth (asha), if he might receive for himself 'ad-dinam vakhedrahyo (the sweetness of speech)'." (Y.29.8).

Clearly then, it is through the "sweetness of speech" that man is able to generate a gnosis of truth, for within the good word lies the potential good deed. Prayer is a medium through which man consciously strives to affirm the existence and the inherent nature of God through the link that is generated by the prayer in the three worlds. The holy word is often likened to the truth itself as truth is the word of God which affirms itself to itself. In the Rashn Yasht, Zarathushtra is said to have asked Ahura Mazda: "...What of the Holy Word is created true?...Ahura Mazda answered: '"...the most glorious Holy Word (itself), this is what in the Holy Word is created true, that which is created progress making, that which is fit to discern, that which is healthful, wise and happy, that which is more powerful to destroy than all other creatures.'" (Y.12.1-2).
Prayer, in other words, gives man an inner happiness coupled with strength and power in order to thwart the forces of deceit in the period of heightened conflict. Prayer equips man "...for the encounter with, and for the displacement of Aangra Mainyu with his creatures which are likewise evil as he is, for he is filled with death." (Y.61.2).

In the Sraosha Yasht Hädokht it is stated, "...The faithful one who pronounces most words of blessing is the most victorious in victory; the Holy Word (Spenta Māthra) takes best, the unseen druj away..." (Y.11.3). This implies that prayer uttered with the right consciousness and motivation generates a power (omnl) that helps man to overwhelm the Lie.

In Zoroastrianism, God is seen to be a friend of man, "...Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend." (Y.46.2). A man who accepts God's friendship has to communicate with this cosmic force in order that he is able to express his anxieties, expectations and desires, as well as proffer thanks to the Lord of Wisdom who bestows goodness upon all His creations.

The Holy Word Incarnate : Sraosha

In Zoroastrianism the Yazata Sraosha is recognized to be the Lord of Prayer. One of his characteristic epithets is tanu.māthra, he whose body is the sacred word. "May Glory be to Sraosha the blessed, the mighty, the incarnate word of reason, whose body is the māthra, him of the daring spear, devoted to the Lord, for (his) sacrificial worship, homage, propitiation, and praise." (Y.57.1).

It is through prayer that man is given the strength and discipline to battle against the forces of evil. Both these qualities are soldiery zones and hence the Lord of Prayer bears a similarity to the warrior Yazata Mithra, the Lord of Contract.

In the Avesta, Sraosha is the only Yazata who has two hymns dedicated in his honour and in the Gāthās he is recognized to be the "greatest of all" (Av.vispē.māthihan Y.33.2). He also plays a role in the after-life doctrine, for it is Sraosha who acts as one of the assessors at the "Bridge of the Separator". "...Sraosha the righteous, gives the soul, for three days and nights, the place of the spirit of air in the world, and protection, and because of the protectiveess of Sraosha...and likewise by Sraosha's taking the account, ...for that purpose are the manifest reasons for performing and ordering the ceremony of Sraosha for three days and nights." (Dd.28.5 – 6).

Sraosha, the Lord of Prayer, is invoked frequently in order that he may bestow protection upon the person who invokes him. Hence the Baj of Sraosha is one of the most commonly used formulae in Zoroastrian rituals. Within Sraosha lies the gracious word that protects him who understands the form of that word, from which may be derived an explanation or revelation that incarnates in the Spenta Māthra. "We revere Sraosha...of the gracious words, of the warning and guarding words, who intones our hymns on every side, who possesses understanding, and of every brilliant form which abounds in many an explanation and revelation of the word, who has the first place in the Māthra." (Y.57.19 – 20).

Continuity : A Link with the Past

The Gāthās constitute the bedrock of Zoroastrian prayers, for it is in the prophet's own words that one finds the spirit of the religion. The most powerful prayers therefore are the Gāthās, insulated by later compilations which are recited before and after these divine hymns. "...And we worship all the words of Zarathushtra, and all the decrees well done (for him), both those that have been done, and those which are yet to be done." (Y.57.4).

When one recites the Gāthās, it is in effect reliving and trying to experience the prophet's
revelation on an existential level. It is within the language of revelation that the strength, authenticity and continuity of the religion are founded. If one changes the language of revelation it follows that the spirit of revelation, its esoteric quality, changes with it. The strength of the Avesta lies in the fact that the prayers of the tradition have been repeated innumerable times by the followers of the faith. When this happens there is an unbroken transmission of the power of the word from which a continuity develops. When the continuity is altered, the spirit behind that continuity also undergoes a change. Hence it is imperative to continue reciting one’s prayers in the root language and not merely read them in translated form. In translation, not only is there a loss of meaning but much more important, there is a loss in the spirit that links the present with the past. Within the sacred words lie not only the potential future deeds but also embodied within them are the deeds of the past threaded together in the present, by a person who chooses to reactivate this continuity. This continuity links man to his primordial source, and at the same time enables man to experience an inexplicable harmony within the moment, a “communion with God”.

It should be borne in mind that prayer is not just an intellectual dialogue with God but a devotional communion which necessitates the need for a continuity of the spirit that the prayer embodies. However, there is an intellectual dimension which also exists within the sacred word. This dimension may be realized when a Zoroastrian comprehends the meaning of what he is praying, “......we worship unto the knowledge of the Holy Word.” (Sirozah 2.29). The knowledge of what one prays is to be found in the translation of that prayer. However, in the translation there will undoubtedly be some loss of originality and content; nevertheless it does give a person an intellectual insight into the meaning of the prayer. If one chooses to pray in a commonly understood language, then the continuity and spirit of the prayer is undoubtedly going to suffer. On the other hand, the recitation in the language of compilation, complemented with an intellectual appreciation of the prayer is perhaps striking the right balance.

Above all, a Zoroastrian should realize that prayer must always be an existential communion with God which is all the more heightened when man consciously recognizes the strength of the holy Word. “And we worship the praises of the prayer which were the production of the ancient world, those which are (now) recollected and put in use, those which are now learned and taught, those which are being held in mind, and so) repeated, those remembered and recited, and those worshipped, and thus the ones which further the world through grace in its advance. And we worship the parts of the praises of the Yasna, and their recitation as it is heard, even their memorized recital and their chanting and their offering as complete.” (Y.55.6).

Prayer: The Power of Healing

Since ancient times Zoroastrian prayers have been used for the purposes of healing. It is believed that through the power of prayer, man is able to combat evil and restore harmony and balance in the world. One of the central themes of esoteric Zoroastrianism is the use of prayer to restore a state of balance and harmony, for it is believed that disorder, disease and pain are the direct results of the affliction of evil. “The Creator Ohrmazd has given injunction unto Zarathushtra that the Yathā Ahū Vairyaš the smitter of the demons and the protector of the body.” (Par. Riv. p 10).

In Zoroastrianism, healing is not just the curing of illness but it is the act of restoring order and harmony in the world. In the Ardibehesht Yast (Y.3.6), five types of healers are mentioned:

1. The healer who heals through the truth. (Av.ashed-baishazd - the faith healer).
2. The healer who heals through the knowledge of the doctrine. (Av.daid-baishazd - the preacher).
3. The healer who heals with a knife. (Av. koreštō-baēshtazō - the surgeon).
4. The healer who heals through using plants and herbs. (Av. urvarō-baēshtazō - the herbalist).
5. The healer who heals through the holy word. (Av. māhṛō-baēshtazō - the one who prays).

It is the fifth type of healer who is believed to be the most effective for in the same verse it is stated, "...amongst all remedies this one is the healing, one that deals with the Holy Word (Av. spenta māhītra); this one is that which will best drive away sickness from the body of the faithful; for this one is the best healing of all cures." (Ys. 3.6).

Within the māhṛō-baēshtazō there are two methods of healing - the first done through the performance of high inner rituals in Zoroastrian fire temples, and the second, done through the use of nīrangs. A nīrang is an incantation of a formula of prayers which, when recited within a proper prescribed framework of other prayers, is believed to generate a power and an efficacy necessary for healing. A nīrang is juxtaposed between two portions of prayers which are collectively referred to as the bāj (Ph. bāj). The bāj itself is framed in two sections which are technically known as "taking the bāj" (Ph. wāj grīstān, Guj. bāj levān) and "leaving the bāj" (Ph. wāj be guftān, Guj. bāj mukvān).

A healer therefore must be in a state of high physical and ritual purity. According to the Shāyest-nē-shāyest, a healer is "...a righteous man, O Spitama Zarathushtra, who is a purifier, who should be a speaker that speaks truly, and an enquirer of the sacred texts,...and one who understands the purification of the Zoroastrian worshippers, that is he understands its religious formulæ, the nīrangs." (Shāst. 12.23).

1. The Development of Prayers
Over the centuries, the prayers in Zoroastrianism have been compiled in two languages, Avestan and Pahlavi. The earliest prayers are the hymns of the prophet - the Čāhās which, soon after the prophet's death it is believed, were insulatd by the corpus of later compilations known as the Yasna.

The authorship and dating of all the post Čāhā prayers and literature (Yasnās, Yashhts, Nāyishēs, Vendidad and the Khordeh Āvesta, as well as the later Pahlavi compilations) are unknown. They nevertheless incorporate within themselves a homogeneous link of exoteric truths, which in no way contradict the spirit of the Čāhās. The later prayers were undoubtedly compiled by spiritually evolved sages who must have been in a heightened state of awareness and knowledge to maintain the uniformity and the spiritual continuity of the tradition.

2. The Five Categories of Prayers
1. Wisdom poetry eg. the prophet's hymns, the Čāhās.
2. Meditative formulæ eg. the Ahunāvar, Ashem Vohu, Yēngē Hādīm and Airyema Ishyō.
3. Prayers of praise, propitiation and thanksgiving eg. the Yasna, Yashhts and Nāyishēs.
4. Prayers for boons and intercession eg. the Yashhts, Dīo Tan-Dōrōstī and Pātēt Pashēnānī.
5. Prayers of ritual instructions eg. the Vendidad.

3. The Mechanics of Prayer
Zoroastrian prayers may either be recited aloud (Ph. gushāda) or silently (Ph. bīsha). Tradition has it that the efficacy of the prayer is greater when one recites it at an audible level so that the harmonious sound of the prayer is able to generate a ritual power (amāl) as well as a quality that is realized and may be experienced differently by each individual. Hence for all our rituals, the prayers are recited aloud as
it is believed that the recitation of a string of holy words reproduces a māthic quality which in turn is believed to drive away the demons. When prayers are audibly recited the innate power of the word becomes dynamic, resulting in an increase in the awareness of the individual. This in turn produces a heightened spiritual state based upon the collage of holy words which then indefinitely resonate in the universe. Audible sounds also tend to change the breathing pattern of the individual activating, it is believed the spiritual centres within the body, commonly known as the chakras.

When a prayer is recited silently, the effect is of a different nature. Here, the prayer lends itself to a private communion of a meditative sort between man and his Creator. This in turn enables man to focus upon the mirrored reality of the workings of God within himself, resulting in a momentary insight of another dimension. At certain points in a ritual, the priest often recites a prayer in an intoned voice (biskha). This is done in order to denote a change in the language and metre when a Pahlavi portion is juxtaposed between two Avestan sections. For example, in the Atash Nyāish prayer after the Avestan words “...yā ahmā, ašāñ avastā, hikā, raohas - pairashā asahā beju yoozatū”, one silently intones a Pahlavi verse “Ohrmazd Khodaē awačūnī-merdum...nēkē resānūd, ēdun bōd!”, followed by the Ahamnavar prayer which is recited aloud as it is in the Avestan language.

The Attitudinal Responses to Prayer

There are seven basic attitudinal responses towards the recitation of prayer resulting in a variety of experiences derived thereof.

Vegetable Man
The doer is a person who prays mechanically through habit and fails to experience existentially the quality of the prayer.

The thinker is a person who seeks an intellectual understanding and in doing so, merely thinks about the prayer and often does not experience it.

The seeker is a person who prays habitually with feeling, but is not interested in intellectually comprehending the prayer.

Animal Man
The seeker is a person who strives to go beyond the first three responses and in doing so, begins to get a glimpse of a subtler dimension that may be experienced through the recitation of prayer.

Homo sapiens
The ashatan is a person who, through volitional consciousness, realizes and experiences the theory and practice of the religion. The prayer then becomes a living reality which helps in the furtherance of the right thought, word and action based upon truth for its own sake.

The cosmic man is a person who recognizes the macro-cosmic effect rendered through cumulative worship which results in the well-being and furtherance of the whole community. A man at this level knows the source and the spirit that lies within the incarnate word (spenta māthra).

The divine man is a person who is the bearer of a religious revelation from God or an individual who, through a state of cosmic consciousness, becomes one of the outstanding teachers of the faith. At this level an individual makes history and changes the destiny of his people.

The Five Watches (Ph. gahs) of the Day

In pre-Zoroastrian times the Iranians divided their worship into three periods. The morning Hāvani (Ph. Hāvan) watch was under the protection of Mithra whilst the afternoon Uzayara (Ph. Uzāra) period was delegated to the guardianship of Apam Napat, the “Son of the Waters”. The night constituted the third
period called Aiwisraitra (Ph. Aiwisriithrim) and this watch was assigned to the fravashis of the departed.

Zarathushtra it seems introduced two additional periods, Rapithwa (Ph. Rapithwin) and Usah (Ph. Usahabhin). The first period was from noon till three o'clock in the afternoon, and this came to be known as the watch of Rapithwin, the “Spirit of the Noon” and the “Lord of Ideal Time.”

During the five winter months (Ahūn to Spen-darmac), Rapithwin it is believed, goes underground in order that he may give warmth to the roots and waters so that the cycle of regeneration may begin on the first day of spring—NāRāz. Thus for these five months, there is a second Hāvan watch during which the Hāvan gāth prayers are repeated. The other reform that Zarathushtra seems to have introduced was the midnight watch. The period of night therefore was divided into two parts. The first half was called Aiwisraitra and as before it was assigned to the fravashis of the departed, whilst the second half from midnight to dawn was called Usahabhin which was dedicated to Sraosh, the Lord of Prayer.

Hence a Zoroastrian is enjoined to pray at least five times a day in order to remember God who, through His agents, maintains a continuous vigil in the world. By communing with Ahura Mazda, a Zoroastrian learns to talk to his Maker in a special “feelng way” resulting in an indefinable harmony.
Yathā Ahū Vairyō (Ahuna Vairya, Ahunavart)

Yathā ahū vairyō ahū ratvuh ashātehī hachā, vanghēsh dazdā mananghō shyaathananām anghēsh mazdāi kshathremcha ahurāi ā yim driguyō dadat vāstārem.

"Just as the Lord in accord with truth be chosen, so also the judgement in accord with truth. In consequence of (this) good thinking, institute ye the rule of actions stemming from an existence of good thinking for the (sake of the) Wise One, and for the Lord whom they established as pastor for the needy dependents."

"He (Ahura Mazda) is as much the desired Master (ahu-) as the Judge (rahu-), according to ashā. (He is) the doer of the acts of good intention (rahu- manah-), of life. To Mazda Ahura (it) the kingdom (kshathra-), whom they have established as pastor for the poor."*1

"Just as the temporal Lord (ahu) within us is desirable in accordance with order (asha), so also is the spiritual Judge (rahu) cherished in accord with truth (asha).

In consequence of these, for the Wise Lord (Ahura Mazda), institute the good deeds of life, the kingdom (kshathra) and the gift of the good mind (rahu manah), be ye the pastor who established support for the one in need."

(Free translation)

Comments:

1. "The first line expresses the belief that only the truthful Lord (i.e. Ahura Mazda) and His way of truth must be chosen (over the other possibilities). The remainder of the prayer intones the consequence of this choice which itself arises from good thinking: that


Limestone fire altars — Persepolis (c. 6th century B.C.)
man must live by works of good thinking in His world, for good thinking is the basis of God’s rule as well as that of His worldly prophet.

In the prayer, we find mention that the real Lord as well as the real Judgement must befit the truth, and that both of these must be chosen. This is a step arising from each man’s good thinking and as a consequence, it forces such a person of good insight to further the rule founded upon good thinking in his own world, since the true powers of heaven and earth depend upon this mental attitude. We also find in the beauty of these lines, the implication that Zarathushtra was the first to reach this realization and as a result of this, he was invested as the representative of God on earth. All the key terms and all the key ideas of the prophet’s teachings thus appear in the Ahhu Vairya, and it is therefore understandable why this prayer maintained an autonomous existence of its own throughout time."

2. The Yathā Ahū Vairya forms the very foundation of the corpus of Zoroastrian prayers. It is believed that out of the Fire of astral form, arose this prayer, through whose spirit, the original creations came into existence (Gbd.1.50). It is the only prayer which is attributed to have its own spirit, which when invoked is said to help man in every possible way. Every Zoroastrian child is taught this prayer, as it encompasses within it some of the fundamental principles of the religion.

Man, in this prayer, declares his desire for both the physical and spiritual Lords (ahu) and (rata), who are to be recognized in accordance with the immutable Law of Nature – asha (truth). Ahu and rata may be seen as the physical and spiritual counterparts of man which, when realized through introspection, are the existential realities of the Truth. It is upon the foundation of truth that the (good) actions (shyaodhna) in life are possible, though only when man apprehends the importance of the Kingdom of God as well as the gift of the good mind for the sake of the Lord of Wisdom Himself. A realization of these esoteric principles enables the “one who knows” to help those in need on a physical, psychological and spiritual level.

A repeated recitation of this prayer is indeed desirable, as it is said to give the person an inexplicable power which is strong enough to smite the “violators of truth” thereby keeping them at bay. In the Bundahishn it is stated therefore, that Ahura Mazda Himself recited this prayer to render the Evil Spirit unconscious and ineffective (Gbd.1.29 – 30).

3. "Ahunavar is that spirit which propagates the religion which is formed from the Ahunavar."

"The Yathā-ahū-vairya is the origin of religion and therefrom is the formation of Nasks."

"i.e., Moreover, in the 3 lines of the Ahunavar which is the foundation of the reckoning of religion, there are 21 words. Just as the Ahunavar is the foundation of the reckoning of religion and its 3 lines are an emblem of the tripartite division of the reckoning of religion, so the 21 words of the 3 lines indicate the 21-fold sub-divisions of these 3 divisions, as it is declared that the Omniscient Creator created one discourse from one single word. It is evident that there were 1000 sections of these divisions, such as the hās and pargards which are in the Nasks, from the testimony and knowledge of the religion, owing to the teaching of Zarathushtra of the revered frōhār in the country of Iran; and after the destruction which came on from the ill-fated villain Alexander created by Wrath, not so much as there had been (originally) was recovered as would be possible to regard it as the original writing." (Per.Riv. p 2).
The Number of Ahunavars to be Recited on Undertaking Different Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Ahunavars</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Before going to work or undertaking work of any kind, before asking for a loan, or going to see a wise man, or before returning home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Before pronouncing blessings upon anyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Upon successfully accomplishing a mission, and at the time of celebrating a nuptial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>When seeds are sown or a tree is planted, when one is to cohabit with one's wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>When one goes seeking for a bride or bridegroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>When one undertakes mountain climbing, or when one walks on a bridge, or goes down into a cavern, or when one has lost one's way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-one</td>
<td>When one embarks upon a long journey, so that Bahrām, the Yasāta for victory, may protect the traveller.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Number of Ahunavars to be Recited in Place of the Longer Avestan Prayers

| 121 YA's (plus 12 Ashem Vohûs) | For the Fatēl prayer. |
| 121 " (" 12 " " )                | For every Āfīnagān.  |
| 103 " (" 10 " " )                | For Ohrmâzd Yasht. |
| 103 "                                | For Sraosht Yasht (recited) in the Yasna. |
| 103 "                                | For Khosraud Nyăish. |
| 103 "                                | For Mihr Nyăish.   |
| 100 "                                | For Ardvāzûr Nyăish. |
| 75 "                                | For Sraosht Yasht Hādokht. |
| 65 "                                | For Arduhehshû Yasht. |
| 65 "                                | For Mīh Nyăish.   |
| 65 "                                | For every one of the five gāhs. |

5. Per.Rix, p15.
"Every one who acts in accordance with this (and recites the) Yathā Ahū Vairyaḥ, he will attain to the merit of them without doubt." (Per.Riv. p 15).

"O Zarathushtra! The recital of this word of truth (asha) in the Ashem Vohū and the recital of the formula Ahunavart, increases strength and victory for one's soul and religion." (Per.Riv. p 13, Yt.21.4).

Ashem Vohū

Ashem vohū vahishten asti,
ushā aṣṭi; uṣṭā aṃnā
hyat Ashā vahishthā Ashem.

"Truth (is) good, it is the best
It is happiness, happiness (is) unto it the truth,
In accordance for the best truth (itself)."**

"Righteousness is the best good.
It is to be desired; we desire it!
Righteousness belongs to the best
righteousness."**

"Lasting happiness comes to the person who recognizes and affirms the highest truth, for its own sake."

(Free translation)

Comment:
The Ashem Vohū is a short prayer in which the central theme is focused upon asha. Within the concept of asha, lies a three-tiered perspective. Asha, on a physical level, is best observed by the exacting order that exists in the universe; on a psychological level, asha is the powerful force of truth that every Zoroastrian is taught to recognize, whereas on a spiritual level, asha is the fusion of order and truth, leading man onto the path of righteousness. Order, truth and righteousness therefore are the three main qualities that underlie the concept of asha.

In the Ashem Vohū, man triumphantly declares truth (asha) to be the best, as well as truth to be the key quality in the realization of ultimate happiness. This state of happiness can only be achieved when one consciously commits one's self to the principle of the best truth, for the sake of truth itself. In other words, everlasting happiness is the reward for a person who champions the cause of the best truth for its own sake, in order to aspire towards God-realization.

Airyema Ishyō

A airyema ishyō rajadhāi jamuī nerebyaschā nairbyaschā Zarathushtraḥ;
Vanghehau rajadhāi mananbūhū yā daēnū vairin bherīn mihqādem
Ashyā yāśī ashūn yām ishyān ahūrū maṇatū Mazādā. (Y.54.1)

"May the desired Airyaman (Lord of Friendship) come to the aid of the men and women of Zarathushtra; to the aid also of the good mind, for which daēnū (religion/conscience) will grant noble reward. I ask for the abundance of asha (truth/order), which the most desirable Ahura Mazādā (Lord of Wisdom) promised."

(Free translation)

Comment:
"Another great prayer in the Gāthic dialect, which also is wholly Gāthic in spirit, is the Airyema Ishyō, which is said to be the most triumphant of all prayers, for it will be spoken by the saoshyants at Frashō kērēī."

In Yashī 3, Airyaman is referred to as the strongest māθra against sickness. In the Gāthis, the Avestan word airyaman occurs as a synonym for hushī (Sk. sakhī). Airyaman is invoked at Zoroastrian weddings and on occasions of friendship and hospitality. Airyaman and Ātār are said to melt the metal for the last great ordeal, to separate the guilty and the innocent at Frashō kērēī. Airyaman is also associated with Mithra, the Lord of Covenant, who will assist in the "Making Wonderful".

6. Transl. by the author.
   cf. James Russell.
Yênghe Hâdim

"Yênghe hâdim zaî yêsnê pait yênghe.
Mazdâo Ahurê vašthâ Ahût hâchê
Yaonghâmchâ ûaschê ûoschê yezamâdê."

"Then by reason of righteousness, we worship both the male and female aspects of these living beings in whom Ahura Mazda recognizes the best, in the act of prayer."

Comment:
The last of the great Zoroastrian prayers is the Yênghe Hâdim, which concludes the litany of the Yasna in which long series of gods are enumerated and praised. It is often repeated during the recitation of the Yashts, which are hymns of praise dedicated to a pantheon of divinities.

Kêm nê Mazda

Kêm nê Mazda mârvati pâyam dûdâti,
Hyat mâ drêgêva didârshât dêânaghê.
Anyêm Thwâhmirat ûrîraschê Mananghachê
Tayêm shyoavhrâdish Ashem thrâshêti, Ahurê!
Tông môî dâsâtrim dôsâniyât frâvâochê.
Kê verethem-jê Thwâ pêî sêngê yêî hênti
Chîhêrê môî dâm ahûmbish râlium chîzê.
Aî hôi vohî Sraschê junti mananghê
Mazda ohmâî yahmêî vashî khamîchê.
Pûta-nê ibishyantet pairi
Mazdêoschâ Armaitishcha Spentsaschâ.
Nasê dyâvâ drikshê, nasê dôvîchîşê?
Nasê dyâvâ-frâkarschê, nasê dyâvâ frawîchê?
Apa driksh nasê, apa driksh dvâru apa
Driksh vînasê!
Apo-khêsêrê, apa-nasye!
Môî merenchnish goêghêo astavaitsh ashâmê.
Nemaschê yê Armaitish izêcha.
Ashem Vohû (I)

"Whom hast Thou appointed as guardian for me, O Wise Lord, if the deceitful one shall dare harm me? Whom other than Thy fire and Thy mind through whose actions one has nourished the truth, O Lord? Proclaim that wondrous state to me for the sake of the conception (religion). Who shall smash the obstacle (of deceit) in order to protect in accord with Thy teachings those pure ones who exist in my house? As (a) world healer, promise us a judge, and let obedience to him come through the good mind (and) to him whosoever Thou dost wish him to be, O Wise One. Defend us from the foe, O Wise One and O Bounteous Devotion. Begone demonic falsehood, begone the offsprings of the demons, begone the doings and miscreations of the demons, begone O liars; I drive them away northwards (in order) that they may not do the corporeal world of righteousness any harm. Homage (unto) Armaiti who (is) prosperous."

Comment:
This prayer is made up of two verses from the Gathas, followed by a short extract from the Younger Avesta. In this prayer a Zoroastrian asks for God's protection, as well as he abjures and strongly repudiates the nature of evil. Significantly therefore, the kûstî is united upon the recitation of this prayer, as a Zoroastrian without the sacred girdle is like a man without an armour. The Kêm nê Mazda thus, is deemed to act as a temporary protection against the forces of evil, during the period in which the kûstî remains unied.

Hormazd Khôdêî (Kûstî Bastan)*

Hormazd Khôdêî
Ahriman, awôdashân dûr awôzaschêt; nasê shêkashêh bêt!
Ahriman, devân, drocân, jâdûmân, dûrûndân,
kûkân, karaftan, sastarân gûnêghûrân,
ashmûgan.
dûrûndân dûshmanast frîmân sad shêkashêh bêt!
Dûshmanast dûshmanast frîmân awôdashêh bêt!
Dûshmanast dûshmanast frîmân bêt!
Hormazd Khôdêî!
Az hamû gunûh patêî pashêmânûm,
az harvastûn dûshmat, duzûkht, duzvarshût,
S. Y. 46.7, 44.16 as tr. by S. Insler in The Gathas of Zarathushtra.
8a. Commonly referred to as the "Akuramazda Khôdêî" prayer by the Parsis.
Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!  
Mazdayasnō ahmi, Mazdayasnō  
Zarathushtrīsh.  
Fravarrēnē astāuschā fravaretaschā.  
Aṣṭuyē humatem manō, aṣṭuyē hēkhtem  
vachā.  
Aṣṭuyē hvarshtem shyaothem.  
Aṣṭuyē Dānām Vanghuhīm Mazdayasnīm.  
Fraspaṇkhuhrām nīdēnānthishem,  
kaḥēmdathām ashānum.  
Yē hārēhārēhā bushyēhēhīnāmchā  
māzēdūchāh, vaitiśhūchāh, srēēsēhūchāh  
Yē Ahūrīsh Zarathushtrīsh.  
Ahurāl Mazādār vāpā vohāh chinahā.  
Aēsēh astī Daēnayō Ūrō Mazdayasnīsh astūnīsh.  
(Y.12.8-9).  

Asḥem Vohū (1).  

""Come to my aid, O Mazda! Come to my aid, O Mazda! I come to my aid, O Mazda! I am a worshipper of Mazda— I am a Zoroastrian worshipper of Mazda— I agree to praise the Zoroastrian religion and to believe in that religion. I praise good thoughts, I praise good words, I praise good deeds, I praise the good Mazda worshipping religion, which curtails disputes and quarrels, and which brings about next-of-kin marriages that are righteous, and which of all the religions that have flourished and are likely to flourish, is the greatest, the best, the most excellent, and which is the religion given by Ahura Mazda to Zarathustra. To Ahura Mazda, I ascribe all good. This is the profession of the Mazda worshipping religion."

(Free translation)  

Comment:  
The Kūstī Bastan is one of the prayers of the Kustī ritual, and is recited when a Zoroastrian rejects the Kustī. Once again, in the presence of God, a promise is made by the individual to reject all forms of evil. A forgiveness is asked for, in order to expiate all the sins of thought, word and deed, that may have been committed by the person. The prayer ends with a solemn declaration on the part of a righteous Zoroastrian, to champion the cause of truth, in order to further and promote the world of Ohrmazd.

Jasa mē avanghē Mazda! (Fravarrēnē)  
Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!  
Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!  

mem po gēstā manō, gēstā kard,  
gēstā jast, gēstā būn būd estēd.  
Aṣūn gunēh, manasni, gavasnī, kunasni,  
tān rāvini, gēstā mihōēn,  
 Okhē wrisē paśēmēn.  
Pa sē gavasnī pa pāīē hōm.  
Khshaṃstra Haurohē Mazdā!  
Turbūdē Anghahē Mainēush!  
Haithē varshēn khat vānē fershōēmem.  
Stoṃi Asḥem. Asḥem Vohū (1).  

"O Lord Ohrmazd! May Ahriman be suppressed, removed afar, stricken and crushed. May Ahriman, the demons, liars, sorcerers, wicked ones, evil rulers and priests, tyrants, sinners and heretics (be crushed). May the wicked ones, enemies, witches be stricken and crushed. May the evil rulers be without sovereignty. May the enemies be suppressed. May the enemies be without sovereignty.

O Lord Ohrmazd! I repent for all my sins and for all evil thought, word and deed which has been thought, spoken and done by me in the world, and which has happened and which has proceeded from me; for these sins of thought, word and deed, of body and of soul, and of the corporeal and spiritual worlds, truly do I repent: for myself with (these) three words. Propitiation unto Ahura Mazdā and scorn unto the Hostile Spirit. (May) the will of the truth-doers (be) foremost. I praise the Truth."

(Free translation)  

Comment:  
The Kūstī Bastan is one of the prayers of the Kūstī ritual, and is recited when a Zoroastrian rejects the Kūstī. Once again, in the presence of God, a promise is made by the individual to reject all forms of evil. A forgiveness is asked for, in order to expiate all the sins of thought, word and deed, that may have been committed by the person. The prayer ends with a solemn declaration on the part of a righteous Zoroastrian, to champion the cause of truth, in order to further and promote the world of Ohrmazd.
When the sacred words of the Fravardig are recited, the spirit of Zarathushtra is invoked, thereby allowing his message to be experienced and relived existentially.

**Din-nô Kalmdô (Confession of the Faith)**

Be nâm-e Yazad, bakhshâyandeh bakhshâyashgar meherbân,
Razišhâyân chislayân, Mazda-dähîrayân ashaonyân,
Deênâyân Vanghuyân Mazdayasrânân.
Din bêh râsi va döröst, ke khodâ be bar khalk sêrastadâhin hast,
ke Zartosht avvârât hast;
Din Dînê Zartosht, Dînê Ahuramazd, dâdeh Zarošhî Spitama.
Ashqanê Ashem Vohû (1).

"In the name of the Lord (who is) benevolent, the giver of blessings, and the bestower of kindness. (Praise be) unto the most truthful, the wisest, Mazda-created, good, righteous religion of Mazda worshippers. The good, proper and true religion which God has sent to this world, is that which Zarathushtra has brought. That religion is the religion of Zarathushtra, (and) the religion of Ahura Mazda, communicated to the righteous Spitama Zarathushtra."

(Comment)

This short prayer is regarded as being a confession of the faith. In this prayer, a categorical declaration is made in support of the religion—a religion which, to every Zoroastrian, should be the best and the most proper to follow. Upon committing one’s self to this ideal, a true Zoroastrian must strive to live by the tenets of the religion fully, in every thought, word and deed.

**Dîn-e Tan-Döröstî**

Ba nâm-e Yazad bakhshâyandeh bakhshâyashgar meherbân,
Yathê Ahû Vairêyô (2).

9. To be recited three.

Tan-döröstî dör-avashâtî awûyd; khôrêh anghad ashaâhidär, yazdânê minûân, yazdânê gelân, haft Ameshâspânân maryâz rîshan hamê be-rasât! In dörâyê bûd, in khozâh bûd! hamê andar kastâh Zarathushî Din shûd bûd! Aèdûn bûd! ye bûd Khoda! Khodâvandâh âlamûr, hamê Anjûman-rî (name here, the person or persons for whose well-being you wish to pray) rû bût zarândân, hazrât sôn dêr bûdôt, shûd bûdôt, tan-döröstî bûdôt, èdûn bûdôt! Bar sôn arzûhâyê, sîkât bûyâr va karanhât bûshunâr, bûyâr va pâyânûn dêr; hazrât dêr tûfân bûd, sôn khojisteh bûd; rûc farûkh bût, mãh mûbûnâr bût! Chând sôl, chând rûz, chând mûh, bûyâr sôn arzûhâyê, yazashnâ va nyârashnâ va rûd va zîr barashnê. Ashahûdîr awârê hamê kûr ê keçêhê, tan-döröstî bût, nêkî bût, khûb bût! Aèdûn bût, aèdûntaraz bût! Pa Yazônân va Ameshâspânân kâmê bût!

Ashem Vohû (3).

"In the name of the Lord, (who is) benevolent, the giver of blessings, and the bestower of kindness.

(May there be) good health for a long life; may glory be everlasting with righteousness; may the spiritual and terrestrial Yazatas, the seven Ameša Spenta come towards the radiant offering; may these blessings and desires be fulfilled. May there be joy of the religion of Zarathushtra amongst the people, may it be so.

Oh helpful God! May you preserve the King of the world, the whole community and (such and such person) with his progeny, for a thousand years. Keep them happy, keep them healthy, keep them thus; may the leadership of the worthy keep them permanent and everlasting for many, many years and innumerable centuries.

May there be thousand fold blessings, may the year be of good omen, may the day be glorious, may the month be auspicious, may you keep them worthy in offering worship, praise, libations and charity, for several years, days,
months and incalculable years. May there be righteousness in the performance of all acts of merit. May there be good health, may there be goodness, may there be virtue, may it be so: may it be more so, may your wish be fulfilled according to the will of the Yazatas and Amesha Spentas! [Free translation]

Comment:

This prayer is recited as the final benediction upon the completion of a ritual, on all auspicious occasions. The Wise Lord is invoked together with the Amesha Spentas and the Yazatas, in order to seek their blessings. The prayer focusses on the well-being and good health of man who, as God's finest creation, must be healthy in both the body and mind, in order to weaken the power of evil, and thereby bring about greater goodness and virtue in this life. Man is enjoined to maintain a link with the spiritual world by undertaking to perform the right worship, praise, offering and charity in the physical world. In turn, man is promised everlasting happiness and joy according to the will of Ahura Mazda.

Median nobles — Persepolis (6th-5th century B.C.)
The Pre-Zoroastrian Fire Cult

The Avestan word *atar* (MP *ātārātākhsh, NP *ātūsh*) meaning fire is of unknown origin. The reverence for fire can nevertheless be traced back to Indo-European times. Many centuries later the Proto-Indo-Iranians, who were nomadic pastoralists, used fire as a source of comfort as it provided them with warmth and light during their wanderings on the south Russian steppes.

Without fire, it would have been impossible for the Proto-Indo-Iranians to survive in the bitterly cold climes of the south Russian steppes. As a result of this, they realized their dependence upon fire which they venerated as a divinity. Fire was then anthropomorphized as their servant and master.

They worshipped the fire by offering it clean dry wood, incense and fat which was obtained through animal sacrifice. They recognized the special quality of fire, and hence *atar* was used and propitiated in all their religious ceremonies. Gradually they came to realize that the luminosity and brightness of the sun was symbolized through their own hearth fires which became their object of veneration. The sun it is believed was associated with the order (Sk. *raja*) that regulated the rising and setting of the sun. The regular pattern of this occurrence gave the Indo-Iranians a framework to conceptualize the established truths within the universe. Hence the link between the sun and fire was formed, whereupon fire came to be recognized as the symbol of truth. This in turn led to the use of fire as the tester of truth. A person was put through a fire ordeal in order to establish his innocence or guilt. In one such ordeal, the accused was made to pass through two raging fires set close together; in another ordeal, molten metal was poured onto the person’s bare chest. In each case, if the accused survived the test, he was deemed to be innocent and was seen to have the protection of Mitra, the Lord of Contract. Thus, fire from ancient times has been recognized to be the visible embodiment of truth.

Fire: In Zarathushtra’s Revelation

Fire, in Zoroastrianism, is the focal point of worship, praise and propitiation. In its simplest form, fire is that which burns and gives out light. The burning may be likened to that which renders something pure, whilst the light may be seen as the life-giving energy that permeates the seven creations.

Zarathushtra was the bearer of an earlier Iranian tradition in which fire was associated with truth and order. The zest for fire in Zoroastrianism became the quest for truth. For, Zarathushtra in his Gārhās declared, “...At the gift of veneration to you, fire, I shall think of truth to the utmost of my power...” (Y.43.9). The epithet for fire in the Gārhās is *ātūrī ashrā avarjānīh* - “the truth-strong fire”. When this truth-strong fire burns, it symbolically reflects the inherent purity that lies within God’s creations. Purity is the abstract form of that which is allied to truth, which man as the astighān must strive to possess. The role of fire in Zoroastrian veneration therefore is quite profound. It is through fire that a link is believed to develop between truth and purity which, when realized by the individual, gives him a gnosis of the fire of God.

A Zoroastrian thus, through the veneration of fire, is able to generate an intimate communion with God who is deemed to be the Father of fire - *tava šōrōk putra, Ahurāme Mazdān* - “Unto thee, Fire, Son of Ahura Mazda” (At. Ny.5.4). For, within that communion, are sown the seeds of power, truth and purity. “...we wish Thy fire, O Lord, which possesses strength through truth and which is the swiftest forceful thing, to be of clear help to Thy supporter, but of visible harm...to Thy enemy, O Wise One.” (Y.34.4). In other words, fire enables a Zoroastrian to experience the truth when the holy words, which in themselves contain the truth, are uttered. The power which is generated as a result of this “fusion” is the power that will smite the evil spirit and its
regions. Man must consciously strive to remember and rekindle the fire of God which dwells deep within the heart of man. When that happens, man becomes aware of a consciousness of a high order: the whole of creation then comes to light, reflecting the inherent nature of God mirrored back to Himself through His finest creation, man. Hence when a Zoroastrian prays to the fire, he is praying to the creation that represents life and the inherent nature of God - total goodness.

Fire: The Seventh Creation

According to the Creation story as stated in the Bundahishn, the radiance of fire is from Endless Light - the abode of Ahura Mazda. God created forth the fire which is believed to possess the quality of transcendence. A Zoroastrian who responds to this quality, automatically opens the door to the emergence of God which is to be received through the transcendence of the fire. For it is stated that when God fashioned His seventh creation Fire, it permeated into His other six creations which were then made dynamic and brought to life. The permeating quality of fire is symbolic of the consciousness that man possesses, for it is through consciousness that an awareness between man and the other creations develops. The right awareness dispels falsehood, just as the fire radiates luminosity to cast away the darkness. The purity and goodness that radiates from the fire is all-encompassing and of a different nature, for within fire lies not only the brightness and purity which man learns to harmonize with, but also the inherent power of life. For it is said, "...Ohrmazd created forth the astral body of His own creatures in the astral form of luminous, white fire..."1, and "...the seeds of men and animals were those seeds that were from the essence of fire."2

Fire is both a master of, and a servant to man who is given warmth and light through its physical manifestation. In doing so, the fire becomes subservient to man. "...He ordered the fire to perform the service of man, to prepare food and to smite disease, during the antagonism of Ahriman." (GBd.3.9). When man prays before a sacred fire, the fire assumes the role of a master who is propitiated by man in order to gain a personal experience of truth, purity and righteousness.

When this happens, man becomes supremely strong and is able to repel the forces of evil. Man is God's finest creation, and hence is faced with the responsibility of either kindling or dousing the flame; "...and when they blow it out of anything, it should come out, and when they put fuel over it, it should hold forth." (GBd.3.9).

The role of man is to re-establish a conscious link with the ray of Endless Light in order that man's essence will be in accord with the Cosmic Fire, God. For, "...He produced the Fire... He attached to it the ray from Endless Light." (GBd.1a.4).

The Development of the Fire Temple Cult

In ancient times, Zoroastrians had no fixed places of worship. Within each home the hearth fire was venerated and propitiated, and this practice it seems, continued for over a thousand years after the advent of the prophet. It was in Achaemenian times that permanent altars appear to have been adopted for the veneration of fire. From the reign of King Darius I (522 - 486 B.C.) onwards, there is evidence by way of rock reliefs where the king is shown revering fire set on a three-stepped pillar altar.3 These were the king's personal fires of worship, greatly exalted and revered, befitting the monarch. "There is no evidence to suggest that fire was enthroned anywhere as the object of public cult in the time of Darius".4 However, communal worship directed to Ahura Mazda and the Yazatas was

offered in the open as late as the 5th century B.C.

It seems that during the reign of Artaxerxes II (404–359 B.C.), image worship of the goddess Anahita grew. This form of worship was probably adopted by the Achaemenidians from their Semitic counterparts who worshipped the mother goddess, 'the heavenly Aphrodite'. It is at this juncture that the Zoroastrian scholar priests of the day probably introduced the temple worship of fire in opposition to the new image worship of the water divinity, Anahita.

Thereafter, for centuries, the Zoroastrians had two types of temples; one in which was housed a sacred fire, and the other dedicated to a Yazata, containing a cult-image. The earliest mention of temple fires occurs in the Vendidad. "...thou Holy One! If a man brings to the Dāitya-gātu the fire of his own hearth, what shall be his reward...?" (Vd.8.96).

The earliest fire temples were probably sanctuaries where the fires of the kings and nobles must have been founded, and hence these fires were dedicated to Bahrmā, the Yazata for victory. It was through the Lord of Victory that the warriors of the Zoroastrian faith gained their strength and power, and hence burning embers from the Bahrmā fire used to be carried into battle by the Iranian armies. It is presumably during this period that the Zoroastrian priesthood became more powerful, and hence the priests began to elaborate the rituals of purification which were connected with the king's fires. Allied to the development of this practice, grew the lesser class of fires known as the Aīšām Ādārīm. These fires were formed of embers from the hearth fires of members of the four different classes of Iranian society (priests, warriors, farmers, and artisans). Over a period of centuries, the old hearth fires seem to have lost their importance due to the development of the other two categories of fires. Eventually, there came into existence the Bahrmā, Ādārīm, and Dāityagāt fires.


It was probably during Parthian times (248 B.C.–224 A.C.) that the priests created three great fires which are historically known to have existed.

1. Ādur Farnbāg - the "Fire having a share through Fortune", which was kept burning in Fars (Gb'd. 18.10).

2. Ādur Gushnasp - the "Fire of the Stallion", which was kept burning in Media (Gb'd. 18.12).

3. Ādur Burzēn Mihr - the "Fire of the Exalted Mihr", which was kept burning in Parthia (Gb'd. 9.26).

Ādur Farnbāg, Ādur Gushnasp and Ādur Burzēn Mihr came to be identified as the fires of the priests, warriors and farmers respectively (Gb'd. 18.17).

In the Greater Bundahishn, there is a legend in which is outlined the creation of these three fires. It is said that Ohrmazd Himself created these three fires "...like three lights for the watching of the world, they ever glittered..." (Gb'd. 18.8).

There is also a legend that in the reign of Takhmūra I, a group of people were travelling along the seashore when they were caught in a storm. Owing to the storm, the brazier on the back of the bull Sīādāk was blown away into the sea. Soon afterwards, three fires like lost glories took the place of the original single fire, thus enabling the travellers to complete their journey (Gb'd. 18.9). These three ceremonial fires are also held to have miraculous properties such as those of flying, healing and of spreading the knowledge of the Zoroastrian faith.

6. A culture hero who seeks power over demons and men. He is believed to have taught men the art of spinning wool, gathering fleece and taming wild birds and beasts.

7. Sīādāk is the mythical bull also known as Hādīshā, who will be sacrificed at the end of time.
It was probably in Parthian times that Zoroastrian priests evolved another five-fold classification of fires.

“The fire Berezi-savang is the fire which glitters before Ohrmazd the Lord.
The fire Vohu.frūnā is that which is in the bodies of men and animals.
The fire Urvāzishta is that which is in the plants.
The fire Vāzishta is that which is in the clouds. And the fire Spehishita is that which is kept in use in the material world.” (GBd 18.2–6).

The fire of Berezi-savang is the fire of great benefit, and it links man to the fire of God. It symbolically gives energy to all God's creations and when it burns in the heart of man, it gives man peace and tranquility coupled with great benefit.

The next fire is that of Vohu.frūnā, which means “loving the good”. Traditionally, this fire is seen as the life force in men and animals. Symbolically this fire represents a greater consciousness within the psyche of man. It is this fire which reflects the emotional light that manifests through love, compassion, righteousness and justice in a person. When man chooses to rekindle this fire, he becomes conscious of his environment through which an awareness and empathy is generated towards the well-being of the world.

The third fire is that of Urvāzishta, which means the “most joyful”. This fire is traditionally seen as the life force in plants and it symbolically represents the happiness and joy within this world. Man's task is to kindle this fire in order that the latent happiness and joy within him may come alive.

The fourth fire is that of Vāzishta, which means the “swiftest/best”. Traditionally, this fire is associated with lightning. It is man's task to be consciously aware of the link that exists between God and His creations. When lightning strikes, it is to remind man of the vast power and swiftness that lies within the Creator. The fire of lightning in man comes alive when man continuously chooses to maintain contact with his primordial source, God.

The fifth fire is that of Spehishita, which means the “most beneficent”. This fire comes from Endless Light and it reflects the inherent nature of God who is totally good. When man recognizes and experiences the fire of Spehishita, it is an all-encompassing communion during which man realizes the inherent nature of goodness. The gnosis of this goodness then makes Spehishita man's inseparable companion in the quest for truth.

All these five fires reflect a quality, giving each fire a character and an identity of its own. Man has a two-fold relationship with these fires; he has to kindle these fires of God emotionally in order that the act of reverence, praise and propitiation may be fulfilled.

The essence of fire symbolically reflects and represents the immutable law of order and truth. When the fire in man is extinguished, the purpose of life is lost and man gradually drifts into the world of darkness and untruth. The “nouveau” Zoroastrians will be those who will realize the need of kindling and replenishing the fires within and without in order that they, as the torch-bearers of the “good religion”, will be able to carry the spirit of Zoroastrianism embodied within the sacred fires into the twenty-first century!

Ātash Bahram Consecration:
A Zoroastrian Miracle

An Ātash Bahram fire is consecrated through an elaborate series of rituals during which the highest laws of purity are maintained by the team of priests involved in the process of making this fire. The bringing together of sixteen fires representing the natural order as well as the different trades and classes of ancient Iranian society, reflects the universality
of the \textit{Atash Behram} fire. The fire of lightning, for example, is collected when lightning strikes the earth and is witnessed by two Zoroastrians, whilst the sixteenth fire, the household fire of a Zoroastrian, is made by the priest first creating a fire through friction using flint stones or twigs, and then mixing it with the hearth-fire of a behdelir.

Each of the sixteen fires is initially made to burn in the open with dry sandalwood placed a foot away from it, in order that the wind may ignite the adjacent pile of dry wood. This process is repeated as many times as indicated in the tabular diagram. Upon the completion of this procedure, the fires are made ready for the actual purification and consecration rituals to begin.

Two priests who are in a state of high ritual purity, take a perforated ladle upon which is placed dry sandalwood, and hold it above the fire which has already passed through the required number of collection processes necessary for the purification to take place. The sandalwood on the ladle is ignited through the heat of the fire burning below it. The newly ignited second fire is then made to kindle the wood placed on the third ladle, which in turn is also held above the previous fire. This process is repeated as many times for each fire as was done during the collection procedure. The final ladle containing the refined fire is then kept aside and preserved for the next stage of consecration. The entire purification ritual is repeated for each of the sixteen different fires.

Then begins the elaborate process of consecration. On the first day, a portion of the preserved fire is consecrated by the performance of the \textit{Yasna} (Gy. Ijashne) and \textit{Vendidad} ceremonies along with the \textit{Khshniman} dedicated to \textit{Ormazd}. This consecrated fire is then kept burning in a separate container. On the second day, another portion of the purified though unconsecrated fire from the ladle is taken and is likewise consecrated as the first portion. This second fire is then mixed with the consecrated fire of the first day. On the third day, another portion from the ladle fire is consecrated with the performance of the \textit{Yasna} and \textit{Vendidad} ceremonies along with the \textit{Khshniman} in honour of \textit{Ormazd}. This consecrated fire is then mixed with the combined consecrated fires of the first and second days. This process is then repeated by the priests as many times as indicated in the tabular diagram, for each specific fire. For example, the consecration process for the fire

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{golden_coin_of_shapur_1_3rd_century_a_c.png}
\caption{Golden Coin of Shapur I (3rd century A.C.)}
\end{figure}

B. For the first 3 days in the consecration of the fire of a burning corpse, the \textit{Khshniman} is recited in honour of \textit{Ormazd}, whilst for the remaining days the \textit{Khshniman} is dedicated to the specific \textit{Yasna} of the day. Likewise, for the first 3 days in the consecration of the fire of a dyer, the \textit{Khshniman} is dedicated to \textit{Vahman}, and so forth as indicated in the table.
of a burning corpse is repeated 91 times; in other words, 91 Yasnas and Vendidads are performed in order to refine and consecrate this highly impure fire. These exacting rituals are performed by the priests who it is said, on an average pray for at least eleven hours every day. The same process is repeated concurrently by additional pairs of priests whose task it is to purify the other fifteen fires ritually. Eventually, after nearly 12,400 hours of praying, sixteen purified fires are kept burning in sixteen separate fire vases (afarganye).

The final process of uniting these sixteen different fires generally begins on the day of the first Gahv. Two priests in patwand and in a high state of ritual purity take the first purified fire in a ladle and place it on the large fire vase upon which the final consecrated fire is to be enthroned. The same process is repeated with the other fifteen fires with the recitation of an appropriate formula of prayers. Upon the mixing of the sixteen fires, a further series of rituals are performed. For the next thirty-four days, the Yasna and Vendidad ceremonies are performed daily by the priests. The chamber in which the final consecrated fire is to be installed, is also purified and consecrated through a set of elaborate rituals.

On the day of the enthronement, a final Yasna is performed and the fire is taken in a procession led by the dasturs, from the Ijashne gah to the chamber (sanctum sanctorum). A consecrated path (pav) is made between the Ijashne gah and the sanctum sanctorum, in order to maintain the fire in the highest state of ritual purity and perfection. Upon the fire being installed in the chamber, a final thanksgiving ceremony (Jashan) is performed, bringing to fruition many months of hard work.

The Ātash Behram fire therefore is no ordinary fire, but one that has been kindled into existence through the performance of an extraordinary series of complex rituals complemented with over 14,000 hours of the recitation of Zoroastrian prayers.

9. The process of changing an impure state into a pure one may be likened to the nature of man which also requires to undergo a process of purification and cleansing, in order that man may be able to bring about the perfection and final removal of this world.

10. The demarcated area in the fire temple, where the inner rituals are performed.
The Consecration of the "Fire of Victory"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The kinds of fires</th>
<th>No. of times for the basic collection, purification and consecration processes</th>
<th>Names of the Yazatas in whose honour the Yasnas and Vendidad are performed for the first 3 days during the consecration period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fire of a burning corpse</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Ohrmazd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fire of a dyer</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Vahman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fire of a king or ruling authority</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Ardvhahisth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fire of a potter</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Shahrewar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fire of a brickmaker</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Spendarmad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Fire of an ascetic</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Hordad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fire of a goldsmith or an alchemist</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Amurdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fire of a mint</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Daş pa Ādur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Fire of an ironsmith</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Ādur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Fire of an armourer</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Ardvāstar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Fire of a baker</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Khoşhād</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Fire of a brewer or an idol worshipper</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Māh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Fire of a soldier or traveller</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Teshtar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Fire of a shepherd</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Gōsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Fire of atmospheric electricity (lightning)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Daş pa Mihr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Fire of a Zoroastrian (a fire is kindled through friction by a dastur and mohed and it is then mixed with the fire of a behdel) (40 + 144)</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>Mihr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,128 times</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Brief Summary of the Development of Fire Temples in India

Within a hundred years of the first pilgrim fathers arriving in India, a fire in honour of Bahram was consecrated. An important point to bear in mind is that only the ash, sid, and nirang, it is believed, were brought from Iran to maintain the ritual continuity (sibill). For over seven hundred years, this was the only communal fire that was established by the Zoroastrians for purposes of worship and pilgrimage. With new settlements, the prosperity and well-being of the community grew and as a result, groups of Zoroastrians founded new colonies to which the priests were also invited.

During the early centuries, houses of worship (Agiaries/Dar-i-mihirs) were built, but without permanently installed fires. In these houses of worship, however, the laws of ritual purity were maintained in order that the high rituals of the religion could be performed. Inspeito of these Agiaries not having permanently burning fires, they were nevertheless built with adequate provisions being taken for the necessary ritual requirements such as the regular supply of fresh well-water, and easy access to a date palm and pomegranate tree inside the fire temple courtyard. The fire required for the performance of rituals was brought by the priests, who themselves lived with their families in a state of high ritual purity. Upon the completion of the ritual, the priests would carry their hearth-fire back to their homes.

The oldest Pans Dar-i-mihir was founded in Navsari in the 12th century A.C. It is believed that it was established by Kamdin Zarhast, who came to Navsari with his two sons from Sanjan circa 1142 A.C. Another Dar-i-mihir was founded in Brouch at about the same time. From the 15th century onwards many more Dar-i-mihirs were built, but without a continuously burning consecrated fire housed in them.

The next Atash Bahram was established in Navsari in 1765 A.C. Soon afterwards, an endowed Dagh fire was enthroned at the Vadi Dar-i-mihir in Navsari in 1796 A.C.

Adarans

The earliest consecrated Adarans fire was founded in Surat in 1771 A.C.12

In Bombay:
The first Dar-i-mihir without a sacred fire was established by Mody Hirji Wacha in circa 1672 A.C.

A generation later a well-to-do citizen Banaji Limji by name, established a consecrated fire in 1709 A.C.

The second Adarans was founded by Maneckji Seth in 1735 A.C.

The third Adarans was established by Dady Seth in 1783 A.C.

In Calcutta:
An Adarans was installed in 1839 A.C.

In Karachi:
An Adarans was installed in 1848 A.C.

Atash Bahram

Udvada: (Shenshai - Anjuman); the only Atash Bahram in India for over seven hundred years.

Navsari: (Shenshai - Anjuman) 1765 A.C.
Bombay: (Kadmi - Dady Seth) 1783 A.C.
Surat: (Kadmi - Vakil) 1823 A.C.
Surat: (Shenshai - Mody) 1823 A.C.
Bombay: (Shenshai - Wadia) 1830 A.C.
Bombay: (Kadmi - Banaji) 1844 A.C.
Bombay: (Shenshai - Anjuman) 1898 A.C.

12. The famous ship-builder of Bombay, Lowji Wadia, founded an Adarans in the village of Singapur, in the latter half of the 19th century.

13. This place burned down in 1803 A.C.
Between the 18th and 19th centuries, seven Atash Behram and more than one hundred and fifty Adarans and Daegeths were established, clearly reflecting the prosperity of individual Zoroastrians who, as a mark of respect and gratitude towards their religion, built many houses of worship.

A miniscule community, endowed with many fire temples which were built by the committed faithful in the past, has failed today in its duty towards maintaining these houses of worship which in many cases have fallen into a state of utter neglect and disrepair; a sad indictment indeed to the philanthropic endowment of the illustrious Zoroastrians of yesteryear.

It is believed that the main cause for this state of neglect is directly related to a shortage of funds. However, the crisis today is not merely due to a dearth of material resources, but is one that reflects the diminishing commitment coupled with a lack of responsibility and leadership within the community. As a result, the sacred fires which for generations have bonded a small community together, are today flickering and indeed in a few instances have been allowed to “die”!

The answer therefore lies in Zoroastrians, both young and old, re-dedicating themselves to the sacred fires in order that a link may once again be established between the fires that dwell in the hearts of Zarathushtra’s followers and those that are enthroned in the fire temples.

*Fire altar—Nagsh-e-Kutum (c 6th century B.C.)*
Appendix 1

Are Zoroastrians fire worshippers?

Non-Zoroastrians are often intrigued and puzzled by the veneration of fire in Zoroastrianism. This has resulted in the belief that Zoroastrians are fire worshippers. If by worship is meant an attitude of reverence, worthiness and respect, then indeed Zoroastrians are fire worshippers just as they are the worshippers of the other six creations as well. However, Zoroastrians are not fire worshippers in a pejorative sense, no more than Christians being referred to as cross worshippers or the Jews being regarded as menorah worshippers.

Fire, the seventh creation, is a potent symbol in Zarathushtra’s revelation. It is seen by Zoroastrians as the physical representation of light and truth as symbolized through the brightness and purity of the sacred fire. All the religious rituals, the performance of which is an important Zoroastrian duty, are solemnized in the presence of fire.

Why are non-Zoroastrians not allowed to enter a consecrated fire temple?

In order to worship and pray before the living symbol of truth, every responsible Zoroastrian is religiously duty-bound to wear the sacred undershirt (sudreh) over which is tied a specially woven girdle (kūstī). It is for this reason that non-Zoroastrians are not allowed to present themselves before the fire, as they are doctrinally not permitted to wear the sudreh and kūstī. It is only upon the performance of the navjote ceremony that a person is deemed to become a Zoroastrian, after which the wearing of the sudreh and kūstī becomes obligatory. Nevertheless, a young Parsi or Irani child whose navjote has not been performed is allowed into a fire temple on the grounds that the child is a potential Zoroastrian and that the parents are spiritually responsible for the child until the navjote ceremony is performed.

Furthermore, certain stringent ritual laws of purity have to be maintained in the temples where the Bahrām and Ādarān fires burn. It is believed that the transgression of these laws results in the lessening of the purity of the sacred fire. It is therefore unreasonable to expect non-Zoroastrians to conform to the specific ritual requirements of the tradition, and hence their entry into the consecrated Zoroastrian houses of worship is restricted.

By way of analogy, a non-Muslim is not permitted to enter the holy city of Mecca in order to see the Ka’bah, nor is a non-Hindu allowed into the inner precincts of the Jagannathan temples in Orissa. With the same token, non-Christians are not allowed to enter the Coptic orthodox churches in Ethiopia, just as a non-Jew is forbidden to enter an orthodox Hessian synagogue in New York. In short, upon closer examination it is clear that the religious traditions in which rituals and the laws of purity have been retained, generally prescribe the entry of non-faith members into their respective houses of worship.

In India, entry into a fire temple requires two conditions to be fulfilled:

i. The person must be a Parsi or Irani by race.
ii. The person must be a Zoroastrian by religion.

Appendix 2

Menstruation: “A Temporary Ban”!

In Zoroastrian theology, there is great emphasis upon the maintenance of the laws of purity which are seen to be at the heart of a Zoroastrian’s devotional life. Thus in Zoroastrianism, a menstruating woman is held to be in a doctrinally “impure state”. This is not to be seen as an indictment against women alone, for in the tradition, painful continuous discharge of any kind including the emission of blood is deemed to render the body ritually impure. Hence, even a priest who may have a
bleeding sore or an unhealed wound is not permitted to enter the precincts of a fire temple until he undergoes ritual purification.

However, confusion often arises when one fails to distinguish between regular biological occurrences and theological injunctions. Although menstruation is physiologically necessary, it is seen as an affliction, as anything that brings about discomfort and pain is doctrinally deemed to be the work of evil. The fact that a woman menstruates regularly does not in any way mitigate her from being considered to be in a temporary state of impurity. During this state, a woman is enjoined not to perform the ḫūṣf more than seven times a day and is also advised not to recite any of the other longer prayers.

A menstruating woman therefore is not permitted to enter a fire temple, as her presence before the sacred fire is deemed to lower the ritual purity and perfection of the consecrated fire, the "Son of Ahura Mazda".

14. A menstruating woman in the Islamic tradition is not allowed to touch the Holy Book nor can she attend religious functions (mālāb). Likewise, an orthodox Jewish lady is made to take a ritual bath after her menstruation. Similar practices also exist in the other orthodox traditions of the world in which rituals and the laws of purity are maintained.

The Parsis: Their Arrival in India

Who are the Parsis?

The Parsis are ethnically of Iranian origin with an ancestry that can be traced back to the province of Khorasan known in ancient times as Parthia.

Due to religious persecution a group of Parsis set sail and arrived on mainland India in 936 A.C., whereupon they sought refuge from the Hindu King of Gujarat, Jadav Rana. The people of Gujarat addressed the new arrivals as “Parsi” from the Persian word Parsi a term used in those days by the Gujaratis for any person who came from Iran. The word Parsi denotes race and is applicable today to a group of people who profess to follow the Zoroastrian religion and whose ancestors chose to settle in India.

A Common Misconception

Most Parsis believe that their ancestors came to India over thirteen hundred years ago and not in 936 A.C. The reason for this popular misconception lies in the fact that most Parsis presume that their arrival date is linked to the year in which the Shenshahi calendar was started. The Shenshahi calendar was in fact introduced in 631/2 A.C., upon the coronation of the last Zoroastrian Sassanian King, Yazdegird III. It is hardly likely therefore that in the rule of a Zoroastrian monarch a group of Zoroastrians would have fled from Iran because of religious persecution, when indeed the state religion of Iran was Zoroastrianism till the fall of Yazdegird III in 652 A.C.

An Important Historical Document

The Qisas-i-Sanjana is an important historical document on early Parsi history, which was compiled and written in verse form by moheid Behman Hormazdyar Sanjana according mostly to the information he gained from the oral tradition circa 1600 A.C. It is stated in the Qisas that after the fall of Yazdegird III in 652 A.C., a group of Zoroastrians wandered around for a hundred years in Kohistan owing to religious persecution. They then fled to the town of Hormuzd where they spent another fifteen years before setting sail for India. Thus according to the information gleaned from the Qisas, it seems unlikely that the Parsis could have arrived in India over thirteen hundred years ago. In fact the arrival date as collated from the Qisas would have had to be at least 786 A.C., which is nearly twelve hundred years ago.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Yazdegird III</td>
<td>652 A.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wandering in Kohistan</td>
<td>100 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settled in Hormuzd</td>
<td>+ 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set sail for India in</td>
<td>767 A.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement on the island of Diu</td>
<td>+ 19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The earliest tentative arrival date in India</td>
<td>786 A.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Twelve Hundred Year Fallacy:

It seems unlikely that the first group of pilgrim fathers would have arrived in India twelve hundred years ago, as the Zoroastrians were still struggling for their survival in the ninth century A.C. According to the Muslim historian Ibn Isfandiar, a Zoroastrian prince named Mazayer led a rebellion against the Caliphate armies from the mountainous regions of Khorasan. This rebellion was crushed some time in the mid-ninth century A.C. In 854 A.C. another prince from Tabaristan, owing to Muslim persecution, finally yielded to Islam. It seems hardly likely for the Parsis to have abandoned their ancestral homelands over a century earlier (652 + 100 = 752 A.C.) if as late as 854 A.C., there was sizeable Zoroastrian resistance against the Caliphate armies in the province from where it is believed the Parsis originally came.

During the ninth century A.C., many important treatises were compiled and written about the religion such as the voluminous Dēnakrd, the Dādestān-i-dīvān, the Shāh-nāme, the Epistles of Manushchihr and many other Middle Persian texts. The climate of the ninth century A.C. hardly reflects the nomadic

1. Ibn Isfandiar 137, Zoroastrians p 153.
fleeing mood of the Zoroastrian community; more so if one holds the view that the Parsis fled during the eighth century A.C. Furthermore, great books of scholarship are usually not written in an environment of insecurity and persecution.

Another Muslim historian, Abu Zaid al Balkhi, recorded of the province of Fars: “The Zoroastrians have preserved the books, the fire temples and the customs of their kings, thanks to an uninterrupted succession; they retain their ancient usages and conform to their religion. There is no country where the Zoroastrians are more numerous than in Fars, because that country is the centre of their power, rites and religious books.”

It is also known from historical sources that during the reign of Umar II (717 - 720 A.C.), the Arab governor of Iraq was offered a bribe of forty million dirhams in order that he would not destroy the numerous Zoroastrian fire temples located in his province. This surely indicates that there must have been a very sizeable Zoroastrian community which must have worshipped in these fire temples, and therefore sought to protect them by liberally bribing the Arab governor.

The Correct Date of Arrival: 936 A.C.

Shapurji Hormasji Hodivala’s Brilliance

The Parsi date of arrival of 936 A.C. was first suggested by Shapurji Hormasji Hodivala in a series of lectures which he delivered in Bombay in 1913 A.C. Shapurji is said to have discovered an eighteenth century handwritten note on a blank page of a manuscript which had originally been published by Dastur Aspandiar Kardin in 1826 A.C. In this note was contained a reference to the Sanjan landing being on Bahman rōz Tir māh of the Hindu Vikram Samvat (V.S.) year 772. On re-

flecting upon this date Shapurji suspected that the numerals 9 and 7 in the Devnagari script could have been misread and mistaken for each other. Hence he postulated that the numerals V.S. 772 should actually be read as V.S. 992. He proved his point by bringing to light a similar mistake that had occurred in the dating of the Shillastra Mamvani temple near Kalyan, where V.S. 982 was misread as V.S. 782. From the Hindu date of V.S. 992 Shapurji subtracted 56 years to synchronize the Vikram Samvat date with the Gregorian calendar and hence he calculated the proper Parsi arrival date to be 936 A.C. Moreover he discovered later that Bahman rōz Tir māh coincided with the Hindu Titki only in the year 936 A.C., which further confirmed his findings.

Shapurji also set about examining the historical evidence of the period particularly in connection with the Shillastra Kings, who it is believed ruled the north Konkan area from circa 830-1260 A.C. He discovered that according to the Muslim historian Ma’sudi, the fifth Shillastra King was called Jhanjha who ruled in the year 916 A.C. and who was succeeded by Coggi, the sixth Shillastra ruler. The seventh King was Vaj-jada-Deva whose name aroused Shapurji’s interest. He plausibly conjectured that the prefix and suffix of “Vaj” and “Deva” could have been dropped for linguistic reasons, leaving the name “Jada”, who he correctly guessed was none other than Jaday Rana of the Qissa fame. (The early Parsi settlers would not have used the word “Deva” as in Avestan the term means demon, an inappropriate word surely for the refugees to have used to address the King who had so readily given sanctuary and hospitality to them). Shapurji also discovered from a Shillastra inscription (1003 A.C.), the words Khorasan Mandi which he translated to mean “the people of Khorasan”. If the Parsi pilgrim fathers had migrated earlier in the seventh, eighth or ninth centuries, then there would have been some evidence to indicate their arrival. The earliest Pahlavi inscriptions dated 1009 A.C. have been found in the
Kanheri caves near Bombay. Furthermore, according to the 
Qissa, the Parsee community of the Paria grew within 300 years after 
their arrival in India. The first settlement in 
Parsee appears to have taken root circa 1182 
A.C. This gives additional weightage to the 
936 A.C. arrival date.

Most scholars today have accepted Shapurji's 
well-researched findings; namely, that the first 
group of Parsee Zoroastrian refugees set foot 
upon mainland India on Bahman 106 Tir 197 in the year 936 A.C.
Appendix I

Highlights From the Qissa-i-Sanjian

Page 99 — After the defeat of Yezdegird III (652 A.C.) the "faith was rendered desolate."

100 — Dasturs and laymen went into hiding for the sake of the religion.

100 — They wandered around in Kohistan for a hundred years.

100 — A group of Zoroastrians, owing to persecution, fled to the town of Hormuzd where they spent another fifteen years.

100 — The chief priest realized that he and his group of men, women and children had to leave their country.

100 — They set sail for India.

100 — In due course they sighted land and anchored off the Western coast of India on an island known today as Diu.

101 — The religious refugees lived here for nineteen years after which, upon the advice of their wise dastur, they set sail once again in order to reach mainland India.

101 — They were caught in a nasty storm. The dasturs were thrown into consternation. They prayed for help and promised to build a Bahram fire if Bahram, the Yazata for victory, delivered them from this storm.

101 — Their supplication was granted and a gentle wind brought them to a point upon the Indian coastline.

Page 102 — They sought refuge from the Hindu King Jaidev Rana, who it is believed was the seventh Shihabru ruler.

102 — The king asked for five conditions before granting refuge to this migrant group.

102 — First, "What are the customs of your creed, which of these are open and which concealed?"

102 — Secondly, "You must abandon the language of your country and adopt the speech of the realm of Hind."

102 — Thirdly, "...as to the dress of your women, they should wear garments like those of our ladies."

102 — Fourthly, "You must put down all your arms and weapons and cease to wear them anywhere."

102 — Fifthly, "When your children are wedded, the marriage knot must be tied at evening time."

103 — "If you give a solemn promise to observe all these, you will be given places and abodes in my city."

103 — The dastur readily agreed to these conditions proffered by the King.

104 — The King gave the Zoroastrian pilgrims fertile land to live on. "A spot in this wilderness was chosen, of which the soil was excellent and there they made their abode." This abode they called Sanjan (in memory of the place they originally came from, in North West Khurasan).

Page 105 - One day the dasturs went to the King to ask for land to build a fire-temple in order to fulfill their promise to Bahram.

105 - "The land must be cleared for three farsangs, so that the ceremonies of the Nizang may be duly performed. No alien should be there present, save and except the Wise men of the Good Faith. No person belonging to another creed might be there. Then only, will the fire be consecrated."

105 - The Raja bequeathed the land and "...all the unbelievers within three farsangs were removed, and no one remained there except the people of the good faith."

105/106 - "For several days and months they recited the Yasvans and Farhaz and worked with great energy. "Several parties of dasturs and laymen had also arrived on the spot. In their company were several alchemists...."

106 - The fire was eventually consecrated and made sacred, with all the appropriate ritual objects (ādīn), nirang and ash, which were brought from Iran.  

106 - During the next three hundred years, the Parsi community grew in and around Sanjan.

107 - Gradually groups of Parsis moved out and settled in all directions fairly close to the Western coastline. "In this manner were spent two hundred years in prosperity, joy and quiet."

5. Contrary to popular belief, no consecrated fire has ever been brought from Iran; only the ādīn, nirang and ash were brought by the dasturs.

Page 107 - The most famous priest during this period was Khujastāh "...whose (sole) delight was the performance of the ceremonies of the Bej and the Barzen...that saintly person left good repute, may he possess joy and bliss in paradise."

108 - Five hundred years after the Parthians had arrived in India, Mahmūd Begada attacked Sanjan, when the Parthians sided with the Hindus to fight the Muslims.

113 - The Hindu King was defeated and the Parthians of Sanjan had to flee together with their fire to a hill named Bahrot. "...twelve years thus passed and they had carried the ādīn with them."

114 - Subsequently, the fire was moved to Bānsdāh where it was housed for the next fourteen years.

115 - Changa Asa, a layman, convinced the dasturs to move the fire to Navsari "...as great hardship is endured going to Bānsdāh, for there is heavy rain during that month (Ādar), and it is difficult for us to go there then."

117 - The narrative ends by Bahram Kaikobad Hormazdār Sanjana declaring, "In telling this tale, I have ever observed the ways of the truthful. Pronounce then befitting blessings upon me, whenever you peruse this delectable narrative of mine."

The Qissa-i-Sanjana seems to be one of the earliest extant sources in which historical information is to be found about the life and times of
the first Parsi settlers. An interesting point to bear in mind is that no explicit or implicit promise was made by the Parsis to the Hindu King on the issue of conversion. The five conditions that were asked by King Jodh Rana in lieu of granting refuge were:

1. Information and explanations about the Zoroastrian religion;
2. That the pilgrim fathers should adopt the language of the realm;
3. That the Parsi women should wear the local dress;
4. That the Parsi men should lay down their weapons;
5. That the Zoroastrian marriage ceremony should take place after sunset.

The fifth condition seems to be an odd one, as there appears to be no rational reason for the clause to have been included. Despite these anomalies, the Qestor still remains the main source of historical data on the first Parsi migration to India.
The Achaemenians (559 - 331 B.C.)

During Achaemenian times, there existed a 360-day calendar of 12 months with each month comprising of 30 days. Four days of each month were dedicated to Ohrmazd and these days were deemed to be the days of rest.

Day 1 - Ohrmazd
Day 8 - Daēn 忤ādur
Day 15 - Daēn 忤ībār
Day 23 - Daēn 忤ēn,

It seems from Achaemenian times that each day of the month was dedicated to a Yazata for the dual purpose of worship and devotion. The Achaemenians introduced twelve new festivals to celebrate the important days on which the day and month names of the Yazata coincided (Cuij interophē); for example, Mihr rōz Mihr māh, Ābān rōz Ābān māh. Besides these days, the Achaemenians are known to have celebrated the seven great festivals which were linked to the seven Amesha Spentas, who in turn were regarded as the guardians of the seven physical creations. The first six festivals came to be known as Gāhāmbārs whilst the seventh festival which fell in spring, became the important festival of NEGRōz and was celebrated by the Achaemenians and Babylonians to mark the beginning of their respective New Years. Concurrent with the Achaemenian and Babylonian calendars was an Egyptian one based upon a 365-day solar cycle.

The Seleucids (312 - 248 B.C.)

The Seleucids are known to have started an important practice by dating their calendar from an era when their dynasty was founded (312/311 B.C.). Before Seleucid times, the dating of the calendar used to start afresh upon the coronation of each king.

The Parthians (248 B.C. - 224 A.C.)

The Parthians continued with the Seleucid practice of dating, except that due to intercalation lapses, the spring New Year day slipped back into the autumn. They however continued to follow a 360-day calendar inspite of the fact that the Romans had changed their calendar to a 365-day one in 46 A.C.

The Error:

It was in Parthian times that the date of birth of Zarathushtra was wrongly computed.

From the Babylonians, the Parthians had gleaned that a great event had taken place 228 years before the end of the era of Alexander the 'Accursed' (311 B.C.). They thus added another 228 years to the 311 B.C. date and arrived at a figure of 539 B.C. In fact, this was the year in which Cyrus had conquered the Babylonians and hence it was an important memory that lingered in the minds of the Iranians. The Parthians wrongly assumed the 539 B.C. date to be the year in which the prophet was believed to have received his first revelation. They then added another 30 years to the 539 B.C. date on the grounds that according to the oral tradition, Zarathushtra was 30 years of age when he received his first revelation. They thus calculated the prophet's date of birth to be 569 B.C., or 258 years before the era of Alexander (i.e. 311 + 258 = 569 B.C.).

The Sasanians (224 - 652 A.C.)

The first Sasanian king was Ardashīr I (224 - 240 A.C.), who implemented important reforms in the Zoroastrian calendar. He changed the old 360-day calendar to a 365-day one, by adding five extra days which later came to be known as the Gāhādā days. It is believed that in the third century B.C., due to intercalation lapses, the Zoroastrian New Year day was celebrated in the autumn instead of in the spring. Ardashīr's calendar reforms seem to have had a far-reaching effect on his people who initially rejected his new calendar as it affected their religious sentiments.

This resulted in two calendars—one decreed by the king, and the other older one which was followed by the majority of the people. In the
King's calendar after Anērān rōz Špandārmad māh there were five additional Ġāthā days, whilst in the people's calendar after Anērān rōz Špandārmad māh the next day was Ohrmazd rōz Fravardin māh, which in turn marked the beginning of the New Year. Owing to the addition of the five Ġāthā days, the king's calendar was five days behind the people's calendar. Thus at the end of the first year of reform, the following anomaly arose.

### At the End of the First Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The People's Old Calendar</th>
<th>The King's New Calendar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 360 Rōz Anērān (Fravardinān)</td>
<td>Day 360 Rōz Anērān (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1 Rōz Ohrmazd (Old NēRōz)</td>
<td>Day 361 Ġāthā 1 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2 Rōz Vahman</td>
<td>Day 362 Ġāthā 2 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3 Rōz Ardvarhish</td>
<td>Day 363 Ġāthā 3 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4 Rōz Shahrewar</td>
<td>Day 364 Ġāthā 4 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5 Rōz Špandārmad</td>
<td>Day 365 Ġāthā 5 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6 Rōz Hordād (New NēRōz)</td>
<td>Day 1 Rōz Ohrmazd (New NēRōz)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the old calendar, the festival of Fravardinān (Ġūr. Muktān) was celebrated for one day as it was traditionally believed that the spirits of the dead always returned to their spiritual abode on the dawn of Ohrmazd rōz Fravardin māh. In the king's new calendar due to the additional five Ġāthā days, the people had to wait for six days before the fravashis returned to their spiritual world.

In the following year the king decreed that NēRōz was to be celebrated at the end of 365 days, and so the people were made to add on five more days to their old calendar. Thus at the end of the second year, there was greater confusion.

### At the End of the Second Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The People's Old Calendar</th>
<th>The King's New Calendar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 360 Rōz Anērān (Fravardinān)</td>
<td>Day 355 Rōz Ashi (Eve of Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 361 Ġāthā 1 (Fravardinān)</td>
<td>Day 356 Rōz Ashtād (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 362 Ġāthā 2 (Fravardinān)</td>
<td>Day 357 Rōz Asmān (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 363 Ġāthā 3 (Fravardinān)</td>
<td>Day 358 Rōz Zamyād (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 364 Ġāthā 4 (Fravardinān)</td>
<td>Day 359 Rōz Mahraspand (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 365 Ġāthā 5 (Fravardinān)</td>
<td>Day 360 Rōz Anērān (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1 Rōz Ohrmazd (Old NēRōz)</td>
<td>Day 361 Ġāthā 1 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2 Rōz Vahman</td>
<td>Day 362 Ġāthā 2 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3 Rōz Ardvarhish</td>
<td>Day 363 Ġāthā 3 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4 Rōz Shahrewar</td>
<td>Day 364 Ġāthā 4 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5 Rōz Špandārmad</td>
<td>Day 365 Ġāthā 5 (Fravardinān)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6 Rōz Hordād (New NēRōz)</td>
<td>Day 1 Rōz Ohrmazd (New NēRōz)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The king's calendar reform created unforeseen additional problems. Anērān rōz of the old calendar coincided with Ashī rōz of the king's calendar due to the initial five-day difference at the end of the first year. The difference of five days remained in the minds of the people and so all the festivals were celebrated twice, as no one wanted to arouse the displeasure of the departed spirits. Thus the festival of Fravardīgān at the end of the second year was celebrated according to the people's calendar for six days, from Anērān rōz Spendārmad māh to the dawn of Ohrmazd rōz Fravardīgān māh. In the king's calendar however, the festival was celebrated for ten days, beginning from Ashī rōz Spendārmad māh to the dawn of Ohrmazd rōz of the New Year.

At the end of the third year a compromise was reached and it was decided to synchronize the two calendars, with Ohrmazd rōz Fravardīgān māh coinciding in both. It was also agreed to maintain the festival of Fravardīgān for ten days. Some traditionalists extended the Fravardīgān festival to Hordād rōz Fravardīgān māh on the grounds that Ohrmazd rōz of the new calendar corresponded to Hordād rōz of the old calendar. Hence Ohrmazd rōz Fravardīgān māh came to be known as the Lesser NōRōz while Hordād rōz Fravardīgān māh came to be celebrated as the Greater NōRōz (Guj. Khordad Sāl).

### At the End of the Third Year

(The Synchronized Calendar)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spendārmad māh</th>
<th>Lesser Fravardīgān</th>
<th>Greater Fravardīgān</th>
<th>Fravardīgān māh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 355 Rōz Ashī</td>
<td>Day 356 Rōz Ashītād</td>
<td>Day 357 Rōz Asmān</td>
<td>Day 1 Ohrmazd (Lesser NōRōz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 357 Rōz Ashūtād</td>
<td>Day 358 Rōz Zamyād</td>
<td>Day 359 Rōz Mahraspand</td>
<td>Day 2 Vahman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 360 Rōz Anērān</td>
<td>Day 361 Gāthā 1</td>
<td>Day 362 Gāthā 2</td>
<td>Day 3 Ardvaṭishta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 361 Gāthā 1</td>
<td>Day 363 Gāthā 3</td>
<td>Day 364 Gāthā 4</td>
<td>Day 4 Shahrwār</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day 365 Gāthā 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Day 5 Spendārmad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day 6 Hordād (Greater NōRōz—Khordad Sāl)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Day 6 Hordād</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the intercalation of the five extra days introduced in the reign of Ardāvīr 1, King Hormuzd I (272 - 273 A.C.) decreed that all the former one-day festivals should be celebrated for six days in order to satisfy the sentiments of both factions. The traditionalists were happy with this compromise as they believed that the old feast days were included in the celebration, whilst the reformists felt that their objective had also been achieved through the introduction of the 365-day solar calendar. However, no provision was made to intercalate the

1. Some Zarvanius celebrate the "Festival of all souls" (mukālād) from the dawn of Ashī rōz Spendārmad māh till the dawn of Aṃardād rōz Fravardīgān māh, which according to the Gregorian calendar totals eighteen days.
extra quarter day of the solar year. Therefore
in the sixth century A.C., NoRoz once again
slipped back to the summer (July), instead of
falling in spring (March).

In the reign of King Kabud I (488 - 531 A.C.),
the second major calendar reform took place.
It was decided to shift NoRoz to whatever
month that would fall during the spring of the
year in order to bring back the festival of
NoRoz to the spring season. They discovered
that the start of spring coincided with the ninth
month of Adur and hence NoRoz was cele-
brated on Ohrmazd roZ Adur mAh instead of
Ohrmazd roZ Fravardin mAh. This reform
must have taken place some time between
507 A.C. and 511 A.C. As a result, in the
actual year of change, NoRoz had to be post-
poned by a full eight months. Similarly all the
Gahmbar festival months also had to be re-
organized due to this reform. The Fravardinian
festival in Kabud's reign was celebrated there-
fore from the 26th day of Aftin mAh to the
first day of Adur mAh, instead of, from the
26th day of Spendarmad mAh to the first day
of Fravardin mAh. Hence during this period
the Gahmbar festivals were celebrated for five
instead of six days. It was also decided to in-
tercalate one month every 120 years in order to
ensure that Adur mAh always coincided with
the spring season.

The Historical Evolution of the
Zoroastrian Calendars

The Shenshai calendar dates back to the coro-
nation of the last Zoroastrian Sasanian King,
Yazdegird III in 631/2 A.C. and not, as is
commonly believed, from the date of the
arrival of the first 'Parsi pilgrim fathers' to
India.

Due to intercalation lapses, NoRoz continued
to fall back one month every 120 years. How-
ever, in 1006 A.C., the first day of Fravardin
mAh in fact once again coincided with the
advent of spring; in other words, the calendar
was restored naturally to its original correct-
ness. In 1129 A.C., the Parsis in India re-
membered to intercalate one month in order to
maintain Ohrmazd roZ as the first day of
Fravardin mAh and to coincide it with the start
of spring. The Irani Zoroastrians forgot to
make this intercalation.

In 1720 A.C., an Irani dostur named Juma-
Vilayati came from Kerman to advise his Parsi
counterparts in India. In due course they dis-
cussed the calendar difference of one month
between the Parsi and Irani calendars, but the
priests could not come to any conclusion.

In 1746 A.C., a group of priests from Surat
decided to adopt the Irani calendar and so
they came to be known as the Kadim, the
"ancient ones". Thus the Kadimi calendar
came into effect and is followed to this day by
predominantly Irani Zoroastrians. A one
month calendar difference continues to exist
between the Kadimi and Shenshai calendars,
owing to an intercalation oversight in
1129 A.C.

During the early part of the twentieth century,
Mr. Khurshedji Cama was troubled by the
calendar problems which divided the commu-
nity. In spite of two calendars, the New Year
was still celebrated in the autumn instead of
being celebrated in the spring. In 1906 A.C.
the "Zartooshi Fasi Sal Mandel" was founded
to propagate the idea of a spring NoRoz. The
members decided to add one extra day every
four years, as is the practice followed in the
Gregorian calendar, in order to prevent
Fravardin mAh from slipping back one month
every 120 years. This movement led to the
birth of the Fasi calendar according to which
the New Year is celebrated on the 21st of
March - the spring equinox. This calendar is
followed today by a small percentage of
Zoroastrians in different parts of the world.
NoRoz, however, in both the Shenshai and
Kadimi calendars, continues to slip back as no
intercalation has been implemented in order
to maintain the traditional celebration of the
NoRoz festival in spring.

The Zoroastrians thus have three calendars -
the Shenshai, Kadimi and Fasi - a license for
Zoroastrians to be additionally merry!
Appendix I

Gāhāmbār: A Community Togetherness

Festivals in Zoroastrianism fulfill a dual role in which the participants are enjoined to propitiate and worship, as well as are encouraged to be joyous and happy. “On the day of Ohrmazd drink wine and make merry, on the day of Vahman put on new clothes, on the day of Ardvinštā go to the fire temple, on the day of Shabewear rejoice…”

In Zoroastrianism, there are seven great festivals of the year which are linked to the seven physical creations whose overseers are the heptad of the Bounteous Immortals (A.v. Amesha Spentas). In Sasanian times (224–652 A.C.) the first six festivals came to be known as Gāhāmbār, though it is believed that it was Zarathustra himself who founded the six festivals in ancient Iran. Gāhāmbār are celebrated by Zoroastrians as a part of their religious duty, for it is believed that it is through the harmony and well-being experienced in the physical world that man is promised a glimpse of the spiritual world.

In Zoroastrianism, a Gāhāmbār is also generally endowed in the memory of a departed soul which is invoked during the Gāhāmbār jashan. Traditionally, special food is served to both the rich and poor alike, who come together in order to share the spirit of oneness within the religion.

Each Gāhāmbār is celebrated in honour of one of the creations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gāhāmbār</th>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>Amesha Spenta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maitrīyārēmaya</td>
<td>Sky</td>
<td>Khshathra Vairya (Sovereign Kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maitrīyāshēma</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Haurvatāt (Perfection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paitūsh-haṅya</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Spenta Ārmaiti (Holy Devotion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayāṅhērma</td>
<td>Plants</td>
<td>Amerētāt (Immortality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maitrīyērya</td>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>Vohu Manah (Good Mind)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamaspārthmaēdaya</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Spenta Mainyu (Bounteous Spirit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NāRōz: A Resurgence of Life

The most important celebration of the Zoroastrian year is the seventh festival which is associated with the seventh creation fire, which in turn is linked to the Best Truth—Asha Vahishta. The seventh festival is the last convivial occasion of the old year, but it also marks the beginning of spring in the new year and hence it came to be known later as NāRōz—the “new day”. Spring time in the cycle of life is an important period as it represents the annual resurgence of life and therefore it is deemed to be a day of renewal, hope and joy.

According to tradition, the festival is believed to have been founded by the prophet himself, who it is held received his revelation on NāRōz. It is associated with the mythical King Jamshīd who it is said ruled the world during a “golden age” which will once again be restored at the end of time, and so NāRōz has come to be seen as both a day of remembrance as well as promise. The prefix Jamshīd was added to the word NāRōz in the late nineteenth century and hence the festival came to be known as Jamshīdi NāRōz, which according to the legend is the day on which Jamshīd forced the dēvas to carry him through the air from Mount Damavand to Babylon.

It is on *NãRôz* that Rapithwin, the Lord of Noon, re-emerges from inside the earth after an absence of five months during which he is believed to have kept the seeds warm and the waters flowing in order that life may emerge with the advent of spring. Rapithwin is also seen as the Lord of Future Time, when it is promised that the world will be restored to a perfect state after which the bodies of the dead will resurrect and relink with their counterparts, the spirit and soul. Likewise, *NãRôz* is seen as the potential resurrection somewhat similar to the traditional Christian Easter. Legend has it that history began from *NãRôz* when the sun first moved across the horizon. It is therefore celebrated as the day of new life and joy, a day on which gifts are exchanged amongst friends, as well as according to the *Shâhnâmê*, it is the great day of reconciliations.

The seven great festivals of the Zoroastrian devotional year enable man to be joyous and harmonious through the act of worship and celebration in order to experience the inherent goodness of the material world.

3. It is owing to his absence that Zoroastrians propitiate a second *Hûman gôh* instead of the Rapithwin *gôh* during the last five months of the Zoroastrian calendar.

*Iranian dignitaries on their way to a NãRôz reception (c. 5th century B.C.)*
The Language and the Texts

The Language

Avestan

Avestan, the language of Zarathushtra's revelation, belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and is a sister language to Sanskrit. Zarathushtra's hymns seem to have been transmitted orally from generation to generation for nearly two thousand years. It is believed that there was no Avestan script during that period in ancient Iran. Through the millennia, however, the corpus of Avestan literature increased and the language itself underwent certain philological changes. As a result of this, all the post-Gāthic compilations came to be known as part of the Younger Avesta. The corpus of all the literature—the Avesta—was probably first committed to writing during the latter half of the mid-Sasanian period.

Old Persian

Old Persian also belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and is a cousin language to Avestan. It became the official language of the Achaemenians (550-330 B.C.) from the 6th century B.C. onwards. The cuneiform inscriptions of King Darius I (522-486 B.C.) which are to be found at Behistun in Iran, are in Old Persian.

Middle Persian (Pahlavi)

Pahlavi is one of the Middle Iranian languages which developed from Old Persian during Sasanian times (224-651/2 A.C.). It has a polyphonic alphabet of 14 basic letters which were derived from an earlier Aramaic alphabet also used by the Achaemenians. It is believed that the development of the Middle Iranian languages started from the 3rd century B.C. onwards.

Zand

The Zand comprises of the explanations and commentaries of the Avesta compilations which were first written down in a cursive
Pahlavi script. *Zand*, therefore, is not a language as is commonly believed.

**Pazand**

The *Pazand* comprises of the explanations and commentaries of the Pahlavi texts which were written down in the newly formed Avestan script. The 46-letter Avestan alphabet was invented as late as the 5th century A.D. in Sassanian times. It is believed that the Avestan script was structured on the earlier polyphonic Pahlavi script.

**The Avesta**

**Contents of the Avesta**

The Avesta as it exists today, contains ceremonial liturgies, invocations to individual divinities, the "law against the demons" and various other supplementary prayers. It also includes some prayers connected rules for the conduction of liturgical services. A large portion of the Avesta is believed to have been lost to history; what remains is a complex collection of writings, which may be divided into a number of individual texts each complete in itself.

The Avesta in its present form may be classified into 5 divisions:

1. *Yasna* (which includes the Gathas)
2. *Yashis*
3. *Visperad*
4. *Vendidad*
5. *Khordeh Avesta*

**The Yasna:**

The *Yasna*, which is the act of worship, consists of a series of invocations and obligations addressed and offered to all the divinities of the Zoroastrian pantheon, who are invoked in an hierarchical order. The *Yasna* is divided into 72 chapters, some of which are repetitive. The entire *Yasna* is recited in the *Yasna* (*Guj. Ijashe*) ceremony in which the sap of the pounded *hôm* twigs and pomegranate leaves

A portion of the *Yasna* compiled and written in the Avestan script (Reproduction of an undated, unaltered manuscript)
(Ph. urwort) is extracted and mixed with goat’s milk (Ph. jiwm) and consecrated well-water (Ph. ab zôh). The main corpus of the Yasna is formed by the Staota Yasnya which begins with the Ahunavart prayer (Y.19) and ends with the Airyina Ishya prayer which is recited immediately after the end of the fifth Gath (Y.53). The Gathas are thus insulated to form the spiritual core of the Yasna ceremony.

The Yashts:
These are the hymns of praise devoted to the worship of individual divinities, the Yazatas, who are the “adorable beings worthy of worship” in the Zoroastrian pantheon. Many of the Yazatas have a day or month named in their honour.

The Yashts are recognized by their introduction and conclusion which are similar in style and syntax to each other. Each Yash has however, differs widely in age and content.

The Vispered:
The word Vispered comes from the Avestan word Visperedav meaning “All the Lords”. The Vispered is not an independent book, but it is a collection of supplements to the Yasna. The Vispered ceremony is performed with portions of the Yasna interspersed within it. There are 24 chapters (Av. khr) in the Vispered. Most of these chapters consist of formal invocations in the style of the Yasna. The Vispered is generally performed during the Gathmbar festivals and it contains expositions on the ritual portions of the Yasna.

The Vendidad:
The Vendidad (“The Law Against the Demons”) is not a liturgical work. It is regarded as the Leviticus of the Parsis; that is, their ecclesiastical law book in which are specified in great detail the laws of purity, punishments for sins and religious penances. It also contains divergent material which includes the geography of the Avesta, laws against breach of contract, the importance of the dakhma, pollution by dead bodies, the importance of the dog, and priestly duties to be observed. The Vendidad is said to have formed the original 19th Nask of the Sasanid Avesta. As it exists today, it contains 22 chapters or fargards which are mostly in question-answer form.

The Khodreh Avesta:
The Khodreh Avesta or the Minor Avesta is a short extract from the entire Avesta. The Khodreh Avesta consists of:

1. The five Nyáshes, which are litanies in praise of the sun, light/contact, moon, water and fire.
2. The five gâh or watches of the day.
3. The Sirozah, which contains two sets of minor and major invocations in honour of a pantheon of Zoroastrian divinities. Each invocation is addressed to the specific divinity of the day; there are three additional divinities—Buz, Hâm and Dahm—who are invoked on other occasions, making a total of 33 invocations in each set.
4. The Afrângâns or blessings.
The editing of the Khodreh Avesta has been ascribed to Ahurbad I Mahraspadan during the reign of Shapur II (309-379 A.C.). The modern day Khodreh Avesta includes an amalgam of additional Avestan and Pahlavi prayers which are recited by the laity on different occasions.

Fragmentary Avestan Texts:
A few large fragments of writings, many incomplete in themselves, have been preserved.

1. NiranistÂN : It is an extensive exposition on the rituals of the Zoroastrian tradition.
2. The Nâsks : It is known that the Avesta once consisted of 21 Nâsks and the existing Avestan texts are a part of the original; only the Vendidad and the 3 fragments of the Hádokht Nâsk have survived independently.
3. Other Avestan fragments.
The Middle Persian Texts

The Middle Persian texts are a storehouse of information for any serious student of Zoroastrianism. The Pahlavi texts form an important link between early Zoroastrian thought and its subsequent development through the ages.

It is important to realize that the Middle Persian texts are full of abstract allegorical concepts and metaphors which, at times, are difficult to comprehend. However, one must try to grasp the underlying principles which lie behind the written word, in order that one may appreciate the continuity and richness of the faith and tradition.

Some of the Major Pahlavi Texts

Bundahishn: 6th century A.C.

The term Bundahishn, meaning creation, is applied to the Pahlavi work which relates to the cosmogony, cosmology, mythology and legendary history of the ancient Iranians. The fuller text is known as the Iranian Bundahishn or the Zand Agráhíh, “knowledge from the Zand”.

Dádestán-i-Máhá-g-i-Khrád: 6th century A.C.

This text (“Opinions of the Religion”) comprises of 62 questions which were asked to the Spirit of Wisdom on matters connected with the religion. The topics included the nature of wisdom, the creation of the world, the nature of truth, the 10 happiest and unhappiest lands, the 33 good works, the 30 cardinal sins and information on the best types of food, grain, fruit and wine.

Arád Wiráz Namag: final redaction in the 9th century A.C.

The Arád Wiráz Namag appears to have been initially compiled in ancient times; however, in its surviving form, it seems to be a work of the post-Sasánian period. The righteous Wiráz, it is said, was temporarily transported in spirit “from the land of the living to the land of the dead”. The spirit of Wiráz, for seven days and nights, made a grand tour of heaven and hell while his body was in a trance. During this journey, he saw the rewards and punishments meted out to the righteous and wicked souls in heaven and hell respectively. This text is popular and widely read by many Zoroastrians.

Zádspráam: 9th century A.C.

The Zádspráam was written by mohed Zádspráam, the son of mohed Jwánjánam. It deals with subjects similar to those in the Bundahishn and it also includes legends regarding Zarathushtra and his family, the omniscience of Wisdom, the nature of the evil spirit, the formation of men, and the renovation of the world at the end of time.

Dádestán-i-Kháh: 9th century A.C.

This text (“Opinions of the Religion”) was written by Manushcîhhr, the brother of Zádspráam and son of mohed Jwánjánam, the high priest of Pars and Kerman. It comprises of 92 questions and answers about the faith. The answers given by Manushcîhhr include a wide variety of topics like the expiation of sin, the importance of the sádreh-kúsht, adoption, guardianship, the role of priests and the doctrine of death, followed by the renovation of the world.

Epistles of Manushcîhhr: 9th century A.C.

It seems that the above epistles (letters) were written by Manushcîhhr to refute and rebuke the shortcuts and changes that his brother Zádspráam wanted with regards to rituals. In the epistles, Manushcîhhr ordered an immediate return to former customs and traditions.

Shkand-gumántag Wiráz: 9th century A.C.

The Shkand-gumántag Wiráz (“Doubt-dispelling explanation”) is an excellent metaphysical treatise in which are tackled the fundamental concept of duality, the doctrine of good and evil, their separate origin and existence, and other philosophical issues, by a genius of his time—Márdáâ Farrokh i Óhrmázd dâdín.
Shāyest-i-shāyest: 9th century A.C.

Shāyest-i-shāyest meaning “the proper and improper” is a compilation containing miscellaneous laws and customs regarding sin and impurity, as well as it includes some information about religious ceremonies and basic Zoroastrian doctrine.

Dēnkard: 9th century A.C.

The Dēnkard (“The Acts of the Religion”) is the longest extant Pahlavi work which was written by Ādur-Farsbāg Farrokhzadān, and edited and enlarged by Ādurbād Ermēdān. It contains a synopsis of the Zoroastrian religion during that period, together with a list comprising the whole of the Susa and Avestā which was contained in the 21 Naskas. However the Dēnkard does contain certain eclectic religious beliefs which, it is said, derive their source from the early Platonic, Gnostic and Zoroastian schools.

The Shāhnāme: 11th century A.C.

The Shāhnāme (“Book of Kings”) is an Iranian epic composed in verse form by the great Iranian Firdausi Tusi. He started his work in 975 A.C. and completed it in 1010 A.C. after having composed 45,000 lines of rhyming poetry in the Motoqarāb meter. Firdausi derived his source and inspiration from Pahlavi chronicle called the Khwādūy Nāma— the book of Kings. In his poem he outlines the life and times of the mythical Pādāhdān and the heroic Kayānān dynasties. The latter part of his poem bears the stamp of historical veracity, after the advent of Alexander the Accursed. The poem is replete with rich imagery and stories which, if understood, gives one a deep insight into Iranian thought, history, literature and culture.

The Persian Rīvāyats: 14th to 18th century A.C.

The Persian Rīvāyats comprise of a collection of letters, treatise and messages of instruction given by the Iranian priests in reply to the questions asked by their counterparts in India mainly between the 15th and 17th centuries A.C. The Rīvāyats cover a variety of topics including the doctrine, laws and the instructions incorporating ancient observances and rituals as practised by the Zoroastrian community in Iran. The most famous of the Rīvāyats is the one compiled by Hormazd Framarz, whose Rīvāyats were translated into English by the great Farsi scholar, Ervad Bamanji N. Dhabhar, and published by the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute in 1932. In this edition, are also included the English translations (done by Ervad Dhabhar) of the Olmat-i-Shaur, Bāhrān Yashī, Jāmīspī, Aftān-i Jāmīspī, Saddor Bun- dahesh and numerous other topics of interest.
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Acknowledgements

I would specially like to thank the following ZS
famkars whose collective spirit and teamwork have
resulted in the emergence of this book.

Jawahar Irani for his cooperation, patience and
creative art-work with regard to the overall planning,
layout and execution of the various diagrams as well
as the attractive jacket specially designed for the
book;

Bahadur Merwan for his valuable time, cooperation
and creative advice with regard to all the illustrations
and general layout of the book;

Burjor Poonawala for his constructive suggestions
and for all the photographic positives which were
made for the printing and illustration of the book;

Dady Poonawala for his behind-the-scene help in
the production of the book;

Sohil Engineer for his silent support and help towards
the emergence of this book;

Jairaj Shetty for his patience, cooperation and
commitment in giving the book a "special" touch;

Vera Mehta for her dedication, perseverance and
innumerable suggestions in the overall planning,
design and production of this book;

Pervez Shroff who has diligently typed, edited and
meticulously proof-read numerous drafts of the
manuscript over the past twelve weeks;

Shenaz Munshi for her hard work, time spent and
loyal dedication in assisting with the proof-reading
and production of the book;

Ashok Karnik for his dedication, painstaking efforts
and cheerful willingness in helping to execute a major
share of the art-work nearly;

Silloo and Keki Limboovalla for their creative
expertise and forthright help;

Thirty Stafford for her creative writing in the field of
media publicity for the book;

Roshan, Porua, Shreem and Mehernaz Poonoor,
Kate Panthaky, Janki Bhatuha, Huzan, Amabila
and Sheroo Khanna, Mabrukk Mobodji, Banoo
Lashkari, Peri Cabinetmaker, Rupa Mehta and
Phiroze Vaid for their invaluable time and unsatining
help with the additional typing, proof-reading and
other ancillary services;

Bappy Chintoy for her dedication, hard work and
spontaneous support towards the realization of this
project;

and my brother Farrokh and his wife Yashfaran for
their constant "nagging" in encouraging me to pul
pen to paper.

I would also like to express my thanks to the innumera-
able well-wishers and supporters, whose behind-the-
scene efforts have resulted in bringing to fruition the
continuous growth of ZS:

Bahadur Camadina for being my first spiritual mentor
during the early years of my quest;

Shehnaz and Nozer Panthaky for their advice and
the use of their premises which served as the ZS
office in the early days; many thanks also to Shehn-
zar for her valuable contribution and sustained help
rendered over the past years, especially in running
the administrative affairs of ZS;

Burjor Bharucha for his unswerving silent support
and invaluable advice proffered so readily over the
years;

Phil Medora and Minoo Mody for their consistent
support and encouragement towards the steady
growth and fulfillment of the ZS vision;

Dinshaw Merchant for being instrumental in bring-
ging to fruition a number of the early ZS projects;

Pallon Mistry for the goodwill and encouragement
given towards the ZS cause in the early years;

and a host of other people who have directly or
indirectly encouraged and helped in the furtherance
of the Zarathustrian message.

The illustrations in the book have been taken from:

THE ART OF ANCIENT IRAN by Roman Chist-

Pages vii, xii-xiii, 9, 32, 36, 41, 47, 58, 65, 66, 71,
72, 74, 75, 76, 86, 92, 98, 109.

THE ART OF IRAN by Andre Godard, published
by George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.


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Roman Chistman, published by James and Hudson.
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Page 30.

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