

PURPOSE OF ZOROASTRIAN LIFE IN THIS WORLD :

Zoroastrianism teaches us that our life in this world is a blessing and also a duty and struggle. It is a blessing, because God has given us the wonderful body with physical, mental, and spiritual powers. He has created everything that we require for maintaining our life, provided we work for the same. Every moment we receive blessings of God in one way or the other like rays of the sun, rains from the skies, plants and trees growing from the earth, and many other visible and invisible currents of Nature – are all blessings of God.

Man's Duties in life:

Our life is also a duty. As human beings and as Zoroastrians, we have to do the duties of life towards God, towards ourselves, and towards others. We have a duty towards God, as He has given us our life and all good things in it. We have to discharge that duty by remembering Him, thanking Him by offering prayers, and by leading a virtuous and useful life. The prayer with a devoted heart and dedicated mind purifies our feelings, elevates our life, and leads us on the path of goodness.

A Zoroastrian also has to do his duty to himself. Our body is a sacred weapon of our soul in this life. It is through the body that the soul can perform the duties of this life. It is, therefore, our duty to keep our body clean, pure, and healthy, so that we can receive the blessings of health, endurance, vitality and long life from God.

A Zoroastrian also has to do his duty to others –his family and community, other citizens and countrymen, and humanity at large. The creations of Nature in this world are interdependent, and they help and support each other, hence it is our duty to look after all creations of God. Similarly, it is our religious duty to help and support our needy brethren according to our means and abilities either with our thoughts, words, or deeds.



Dignity of Labour:

Zoroastrianism teaches dignity of labour.

Proper use of hands and feet in doing lawful and timely deeds is advocated in Visparad 15.1. To till and cultivate and to grow corn is as good as to increase holiness.

Work is worship, and idleness is a sin against religion and society, because an idle man is a burden on society



Sudreh and Kusti :

In the Navjot ceremony, a child of Zoroastrian parents is ceremoniously invested with Sudreh and Kusti, 'the sacred shirt' and 'the sacred girdle' of the Zoroastrians, And since then he or she has to put on these sacred emblems throughout his or her life.

The Sudreh and Kusti are the religious implements of the Zoroastrians.

They form a magnetic circuit around physical body, which if properly kept, protects one from evil forces, and leads one on the path of piety and duty.

The Avesta scriptures like Yasna 30.5 and Yasna 9.25 mention the divine garment and divine belt of the Spiritual Beings, And Sudreh and Kusti are representations of these spiritual garment and belt.

In the Avesta scriptures, the word used for Sudreh is vastra and the word used for Kusti is aiwyâonghana.

The Sudreh is made of nine pieces of white cloth in particular shape with a bag in front, which is known as kisse ê kerfe 'the bag of merit', which shall accompany the soul after a Zoroastrian passes away.

Hence it is the duty of every Zoroastrian to be diligent throughout life in symbolically filling up the bag of merit in the world.

The Sudreh is an emblem of purity and virtue. It indicates the path of Asha, which is the religious path of life of a Zoroastrian.

It is a replica of the spiritual Armour of the Spiritual Beings and acts as a protection against vices and evil forces.

The Kusti is made of 72 filaments of wool, woven into a belt. It passes round the waist thrice – with four knots, two in the front and two at the back.

According to the Pahlavi text Bundahishn the three circles round the waist represent the 3 principles of humat, hukht & hvarsht

And 4 knots represent 4 essences of humanity.

The meaning of the word kusti is 'boundary', and it reminds one to keep oneself within the boundary of religious duty.

The circles around the waist represent kasha 'boundary lines' around the body.

The Kusti also signifies a belt used to gird oneself to perform one's duties.

The Kusti Ritual :

The ritual washing of the uncovered parts of the body, and untying and re-tying the Kusti over the Sadro while reciting the requisite prayers is called pâdyâp-kusti, which is a Modern Persian term. Pâdyâb means 'washing, purifying (a thing) by prayer' and is derived from Avesta word paiti-âp 'with water'. After pâdyâp, the kusti ceremony proper begins. In this ceremony, the kusti is untied and re-tied while reciting the prayers. This basic ritual is a must before beginning any other ritual or ceremonial activity by a Zoroastrian. Without it, no prayer can be formally offered and no ceremony can be performed. It is also one of the pre-requisite conditions for a Zoroastrian before he or she enters a fire-temple or attends other Zoroastrian ceremonies.

HVARNAH 'DIVINE GLORY' :

The Avesta word khvarnah signifies 'glory, effulgence, aura, nimbus, majesty', and hence is closely connected with light and fire. Atar Yazata is the protector of Khvarnah, and in the dedicatory formula of Atar, the Iranian and Kayanian Khvarnah is mentioned. The Zamyâd Yasht is dedicated to Khvarnah. It is interesting to note that the Sanskrit translation of this word is shrê.

Every being has a Khvarnah :

Ahura Mazda, Amesha Spentas, Yazatas, human beings, and all other good creations and creatures of Ahura Mazda possess their khvarnah. Hence every human being has his or her personal 'aura, effulgence, glory', emanating from his or her body. The ancient Iranian saints, kings and heroes possessed this 'divine glory', on account of which they were able to perform benevolent deeds for the material and spiritual welfare of the people. Prophet Zarathushtra

too possessed this divine glory in great abundance and that was why the evil Druj was not even able to go near him.

The 'unseizable' Khvarnah :

When the Evil Spirit or the Evil people tried to seize the divine glory of the holy persons, it became akhvarta 'unseen, invisible, unseizable'. When tyrant Azhi Dahaka (Zahak), one of the emissaries of the Evil Spirit, attempted to seize the glory, it slipped into the Sea Vourukasha. Once again, the scoundrel Frangrasa (Afrasiyab) contrived to grab the glory of the holy persons, it glided into the Lake Husravah. Thus the Khvarnah became 'unseizable', whenever any evil person tried to seize it.

Khvarnah and one's actions :

The activity and efficacy of one's glory depends on one's own action in this life. It can be acquired only by the practice of religious virtues and wisdom. One's personal glory would become saintly, effective and powerful by one's pious and benevolent deeds. On the other hand, one's personal glory would become inactive, ineffective and invisible, by one's evil and wicked actions. One's personal glory is also adversely effected by unclean atmosphere, by coming in contact with unclean and decomposing matter, and also by evil thoughts, words, and deeds.

Khvarnah compared to 'Human Magnetism' :

The Avesta concept of Khvarnah may be compared to that of 'animal magnetism' propounded in 1775 by a Viennese mystic physician, Franz Mesmer (1734-1815). He believed that magnetic forces are flowing from human body, and that 'there was healing magnetic power in his own hands', which he called 'animal magnetism', and which, he believed, permeated the universe'.

Although the term 'animal magnetism' and Mesmer's theory have been discounted, Mesmer lives on in the term mesmerism, and the belief persists in the scientific world in other forms and under other terms, and is now a matter of scientific investigation. If the earth is a huge magnet, and magnetic forces are emanating therefrom, which no one can deny, there is no reason why the body of a living person cannot have that same property.

The definition of Behdên :

'a member of the Zoroastrian laity'. The Persian term behdin means 'one belonging to the good religion', and is used to designate a Zoroastrian. In later times, particularly in India, the term was used to distinguish a Zoroastrian layman from a Zoroastrian priest. At present the term is used in this restricted sense of a Zoroastrian who does not belong to the priestly class.

The definition of Oshtâ/Ostâ :

This term is derived from the Avesta word *hâvishta* which means 'a religious disciple, a candidate for priesthood'. It is applied at present to a male child of an Athornan after the Navjot ceremony is performed and before he is duly admitted to the priestly profession. The corresponding feminine term *oshti*, *osti* is used for the female members of the priestly class after the Navjot ceremony.

The definition of Ervad :

'a priestly teacher': The term is derived from the Avesta word *aethrapaiti* 'a teacher, a religious preceptor'. At present a male member of the priestly class acquires the title of Ervad after he undergoes the Navar ceremony, and is now authorized to perform ordinary ceremonies, but not ceremonies of high order.



The definition of Mobad:

'officiating priest': The term is derived from the Avesta word '*magavpaiti*' 'chief of the priest'. Generally, the title Mobad indicates that the person holding that title is a full-fledged priest, authorized to perform all religious ceremonies including the ceremonies of high order. At present, the title is used for a priest who is fully qualified for performing all ceremonies. A priest is allowed to perform the ceremonies of high order only after he undergoes the Maratab ceremony.



The definition of Athornan :

'a priest, a member of the priestly class'. The general Avesta term for the Zoroastrian priestly class is athravan, 'a fire-priest'. From this Avesta term is derived athornan, which term is used at present to designate a priest, or a member of the priestly class

The definition of Dastur :

'a priest, a chief priest'. The term is derived from the Pahlavi word dastawar, which is variously explained as 'one who holds the hand, a guide'; 'one possessing knowledge'; 'one having authority'. At present a Dastur is either appointed by the Zoroastrian congregation (anjuman) of various places from among the fully fledged priests, or by the trustees of a fire-temple. Hence today the term Dastur indicates an authorized head of the priests belonging to a particular congregation or to a particular fire-temple.



Light & Luminous Creations :

Among all good and beneficent creations of God, the luminous creations occupy a special place in Zoroastrian Religion. Since Ahura Mazda is 'the Spirit among the spirits', He is invisible to us. But, He is 'full of light, full of glory' and hence all luminous creations are specially regarded as emblems of Ahura Mazda.

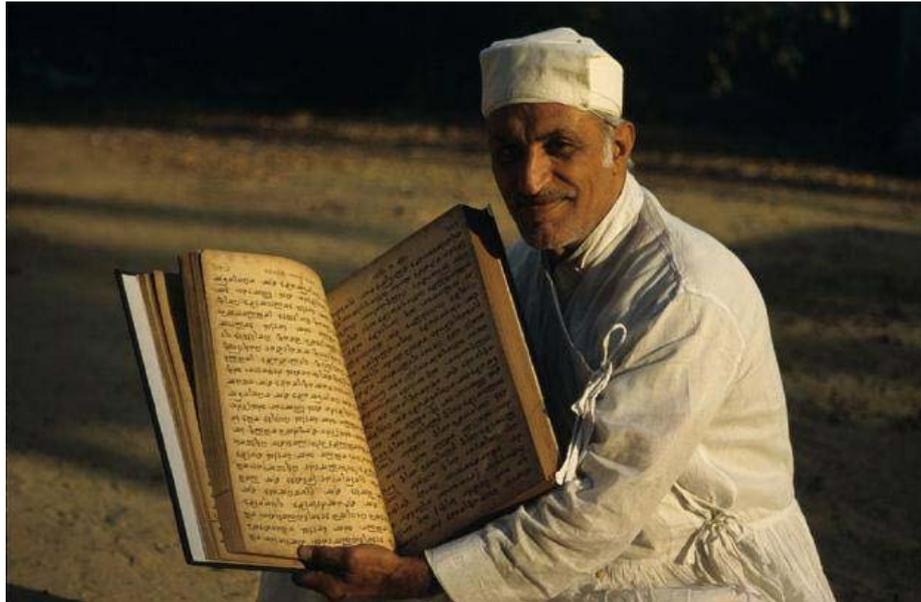
There are two kinds of lights : khvadhâta 'subject to heavenly law', that is self-luminous, eternal heavenly lights, and stidhâta 'subject to the worldly law', that is worldly lights. Further, the highest paradise is also termed anagra raochah 'the Endless Light'.



Avesta :

'Avesta' is the name generally applied to the oldest scripture of the Parsis. The same term is used also for the language in which the scriptures are composed. The Avesta belongs to the East Iranian group of languages. The ancient homeland of the Avesta people was situated in the land of the two rivers Oxus and Jaxartes, more particularly in the ancient province of Chorasmia, in the north-east of modern Iran.

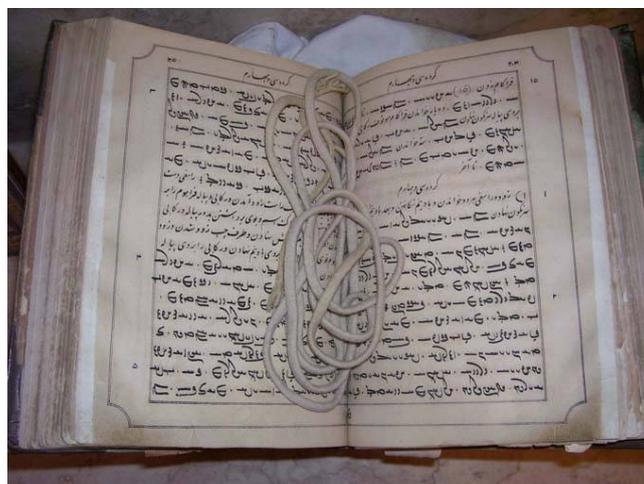
The term 'Avesta' does not occur in the Avesta scriptures. The term apastak occurs in the Pahlavi literature of the Sasanian and post-Sasanian times, and is applied to the earliest scripture of the Parsis. The same term is used also in the general sense of 'scripture, sacred text'. From this Pahlavi word is derived the term 'Avesta'. The term occurs in Pazand as Avasta, avista; and in the Shahnameh as avasta, usta, ust (perhaps for metrical reasons).



Pahlavi :

The term Pahlavi is derived from the Old Persian word Parthava, and it originally signifies the language of the ancient province of Parthia in north-eastern Iran. The term is generally applied to the language of Iran during the Parthian and Sasanian periods, and of the Zoroastrians in Iran up to the end of the 9th century. Pahlavi is written in a script of Aramaic origin, and in the ideogrammatical system of writing, which means there are certain non-Iranian words which are used only in written language, but are replaced by their fixed Iranian equivalents in spoken language.

The Pahlavi script contains only 12 primary letters, and hence most of these letters have more than one phonetic value. Based on this Pahlavi script, a new and improved script was invented about the 6th century, which is the present Avesta script. Since that time, the Avesta has been written in this script.



Zand:

There were commentaries in the Avesta language on the ancient Avesta prayers which were known as âzainti 'knowledge, explanation, commentary.' From this Avesta word is derived Pahlavi word zand which generally refers to the Pahlavi translations and commentaries of Avesta. Yasna Hâ 19, 20, and 21 are Avesta commentaries on the prayers Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Ashem Vohu, and Yenghe Hâtâm respectively. The corresponding terms used in the Shahnameh is ustâ u zand. The Pahlavi term apastâk u zand is translated into Sanskrit as avistâvâni vyâkhyânâcha 'Avesta speech and commentary'.



Mazdayasni / Mazdayasni Zarathushtri :

The Parsis, as taught by their Prophet, recognise Ahura Mazda as Almighty God and sole Creator of all creations. Since in the Avesta, the Almighty Creator is also known simply as Ahura, 'the lord of life' or as Mazda 'the omniscient', the Avesta term Mazdayasni 'a worshipper of Mazda' is generally applied to the Zoroastrians.

The Avesta term Zarathushtri means 'a follower of Zoroaster, a Zoroastrian'. Since the Parsis profess the religion preached by Zoroaster, and they recognise Zoroaster as their prophet, they are known also as 'Zoroastrian'. In the Avesta prayer of the Articles of Faith, daily recited by the Zoroastrians, a Zoroastrian solemnly affirms: "mazdayasno ahmi, mazdayasno zarathushtrish" I am a Mazdayasni, (I am) a Mazdayasni Zarathushtri". Since the Parsis affirm their faith in Ahura Mazda as almighty God, and in Zarathushtra as their Prophet, they are thus known by their double appellation : Mazdayasni Zarathushtri.



PRAYERS :

The general Avesta word for prayer is namah, which also means 'obligation'.

Prayer is regarded as a spiritual weapon and protection and defence against invisible evil forces.

If offered with sincerity, devotion and piety it brings upon the faithful the divine boon, which is the source of good thought, good word, and good deed.

There are also other words for 'prayer' in the Avesta like staota 'praise, song of praise', vahma 'adoration, praise',

Sravah 'chant, word, teaching' and mânthra 'thought(-force), , holy word, holy spell'.

Mânthra - the Avesta words of prayer :

Mânthra is one of the Avesta words for 'prayer'. It is the Holy Word of divine origin, And has its origin in Ahura Mazda. Mânthra Spenta is the Yazata presiding over the Holy Mânthra, and is considered to be the soul of Ahura Mazda.

Three collections of the Mânthra from ancient times are mentioned in the Avesta scriptures:

- (1) Mânthra Spenta, 'the Holy Word',
- (2) Fshûshû Mânthra 'the Word of Prosperity', and
- (3) Staota Yasnya 'the hymns pertaining to worship'.

Rules for chanting the Mânthra in ancient times :

The Avesta prayers are the holy Mânthra and in ancient times they were recited very carefully according to the prescribed rules.

Among the Avesta prayers, Ahuna Vairya or Ahunavar (the prayer beginning with yathâ ahû vairyô) is the most sacred formula, recited with special reverence and devotion by the Zoroastrians on various occasions.

According to Yasna 9.14, Prophet Zarathushtra was the first to chant Ahuna Vairya in the material world,

" four times, observing the rules of metre, with louder intonation at the end".

According to Yasna 57.8 Sarosh Yazata was the first to chant the five Gathas of Prophet Zarathushtra –

“line by line, stanza by stanza, Syllable by syllable and (metrical) foot by foot.”

Atar - the Avesta term for Fire :

The general Avesta term for the visible fire, and invisible heat energy, that is pervading the Universe, is âtar. As a luminous creation in direct and close contact with human beings the fire in one form or the other lays an important part in the religious life of man in almost all religions of the world. The presence of fire in all Zoroastrian ceremonies is inevitable, as is the presence of Agni in all Vedic ceremonies.

In the Zoroastrian Religion the fire is specially venerated as the shining emblem of Ahura Mazda, prayers are offered unto it, and the devotee longs to approach Ahura Mazda through the Fire.



ASHA - THE DIVINE COSMIC LAW :

The Avesta term Asha connotes everything that is right and lawful.

It implies all virtues of life like truth, honesty, purity, piety, devotion, industry, duty and liberality; and also all laws of purity.

From Avesta word asha is derived Parsi Gujrati word ashoi 'purity', which generally connotes 'physical and mental purity, holiness, piety and virtue'.

Asha also indicates the Zoroastrian path of life in accordance with the holy Law of God. This technical Avesta term is interpreted by the popular and familiar Avesta words :

Humata, hukhta, hvarshta 'good thought, good word, good deed'.



THE SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL WORLDS :

Zoroastrianism recognizes two worlds: the mental/spiritual world and the material/physical world.

The spiritual world is that about which we can only think, which we cannot see with our physical eyes and which we cannot touch or feel by our bodily organs.

The material world is that in which we live, which we can see with our physical eyes, and which we can touch and feel with our bodily organs.

The physical body of the creations of the material world is made of earthly elements; but in this earthly body there are spiritual elements and powers of God which are working in all living creations. If and when the spiritual powers go out of them they die.



CONSTITUTION OF MAN :

Human body is made of the earthly elements; but in this earthly body there are spiritual elements and powers of God, without which man cannot live. Among the spiritual elements of man are :

The Soul :

The Soul is the most important spiritual element of man, because it is responsible for the action of man in this life. The Avesta word for 'soul' is urvan and the Pahlavi equivalent is ravn, and the word literally mean 'the chooser'. Man is free to choose either of the two paths: the good path of virtue, industry and philanthropy; or the evil path of vice, slothfulness, selfishness and wickedness. However, a stern warning has been sounded in explicit terms: Man shall have to face the consequences of his actions - good for goodness, and evil for wickedness.

The Fravashi :

The Fravashi is the angelic guardian spirit of man, a constant companion of the soul in this worldly life. The fravashi accompanies the soul, and guides and inspires man in this life to be good, virtuous, and to lead a pious, industrious, and benevolent life. However, the soul is free to accept or reject the advice and guidance of the Fravashi. Hence, although a constant companion of the soul in this worldly life, the Fravashi is not responsible for the actions done by man in this life.

Marriage :

According to Zoroastrianism, marriage is a pious duty and a married life is preferable to an unmarried life.

It is incumbent on all able-bodied Zoroastrians to marry, establish a home, and live happily with his wife, children and the members of the family.

As indicated by Prophet Zarathushtra in Yasna 53.4,
A happy married life depends on virtue, duty, and devotion to each other.



RITUAL PURITY :

All Zoroastrian fire-temples and places of worship are ritually purified and consecrated places, and hence they are meant only for the Zoroastrians.

Zoroastrians – both males and females, priests and laymen – have to observe certain rules of ritual purification in their daily lives. The rules of ritual purity are observed to preserve ritual purity in accordance with the principles of Asha and Khvarnah.

Before entering a Fire-temple or attending a ceremony, a Zoroastrian must observe rules of purity like taking a bath, putting on proper dress, and performing the Kusti ceremony.

The Zoroastrian fire-temples and places of worship are specially built with various boundary lines, known as karsha in the Avesta, kash in Pahlavi and pâvi in Parsi Gujrati. These boundary lines are furrows or channels, marked on the ground or constructed in the floor, to mark and enclose ritually purified place for consecrated Holy Fire or for performing the ceremonies of high order. When the ritually purified place is in use, the boundary lines must not be crossed by anybody or else the ritual purity is vitiated.

The consecrated Holy Fire is kept in a sanctum, in utmost ritual purity. It is kept in a specially constructed chamber, bounded by walls, and set apart by the boundary lines (pâvis). Only the priests having physical, mental, spiritual and moral qualifications are authorized to enter the

sanctum. But even a priest thus authorized must possess additional special ritual qualifications at the time of entering the sanctum, like having undergone Barashnum ritual, having put on proper dress including the padân 'a mouthveil' having offered daily prayers and performed dedicatory rites.

Thrift & Charity in Zoroastrianism

Thrift & Charity :

Thrift and economy are important virtues of Zoroastrian daily life. In Vendidad 5.60 it is enjoined that one must not waste even a trifling thing. However, stinginess and miserliness are vices and are to be avoided at all costs. A charitable disposition is specially extolled in Zoroastrianism. The divine gifts of Good Mind are specially meant for those who work for welfare and uplift of the poor

ZOROASTRIAN VIRTUES :

An ideal Zoroastrian is one who observes the law of Asha, who is healthy in mind and body and is advanced in good thoughts, words and deeds. He is one having a sincere, devoted heart, reciting the holy words of payer, self-sacrificing and leading a wise life. Zoroastrianism inculcates active virtues of life. To be good and happy is essential, but it is not enough. We have to be good, virtuous, industrious and happy, and also to instruct others to lead a similar life. Among the virtues of a Zoroastrian household may be mentioned: sincerity, respectability, obedience, peace, liberality, and humility.



Good Thoughts
Good Words Good Deeds



AŠEM VOHU اشم وهو
 مریخ مریخ . کاردن مریخ . مریخ مریخ .
 مریخ مریخ . مریخ مریخ . مریخ مریخ .
 مریخ مریخ . مریخ مریخ . مریخ مریخ .

ashem vohû vahisstem astî
 ushtâ astî ushtâ ahmâi
 hyat ashâi vahishtâi ashem.

Holiness (Asha) is the best of all good,
 it is also happiness.
 Happy the man who is holy with perfect holiness!

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اشریت
کردار نیک گفتار نیک



AŠEM VOHU اشم وهو
 مریخ مریخ . کاردن مریخ . مریخ مریخ .
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اشم . وهو . وهیشتم . آستی...
 اوشتا . آستی...
 اوشتا . اهامانی . هیت . آشایی . وهیشتانی . اشم...

اشویی (پاکی و راستی) بهترین نیکی است.
 اشویی خوشبختی است.
 خوشبختی از آن کسی است که خواستار بهترین اشویی باشد.

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OUTLINES OF PARSI HISTORY

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