

ZARATHUSHTRA AND HIS TEACHINGS

(A Manual for Young Students)



BY

DASTUR KHURSHED S. DABU, M.A., F.T.S.





LORD ZARATHUSHTRA

Resplendent Golden Star of Iran

THE AUTHOR

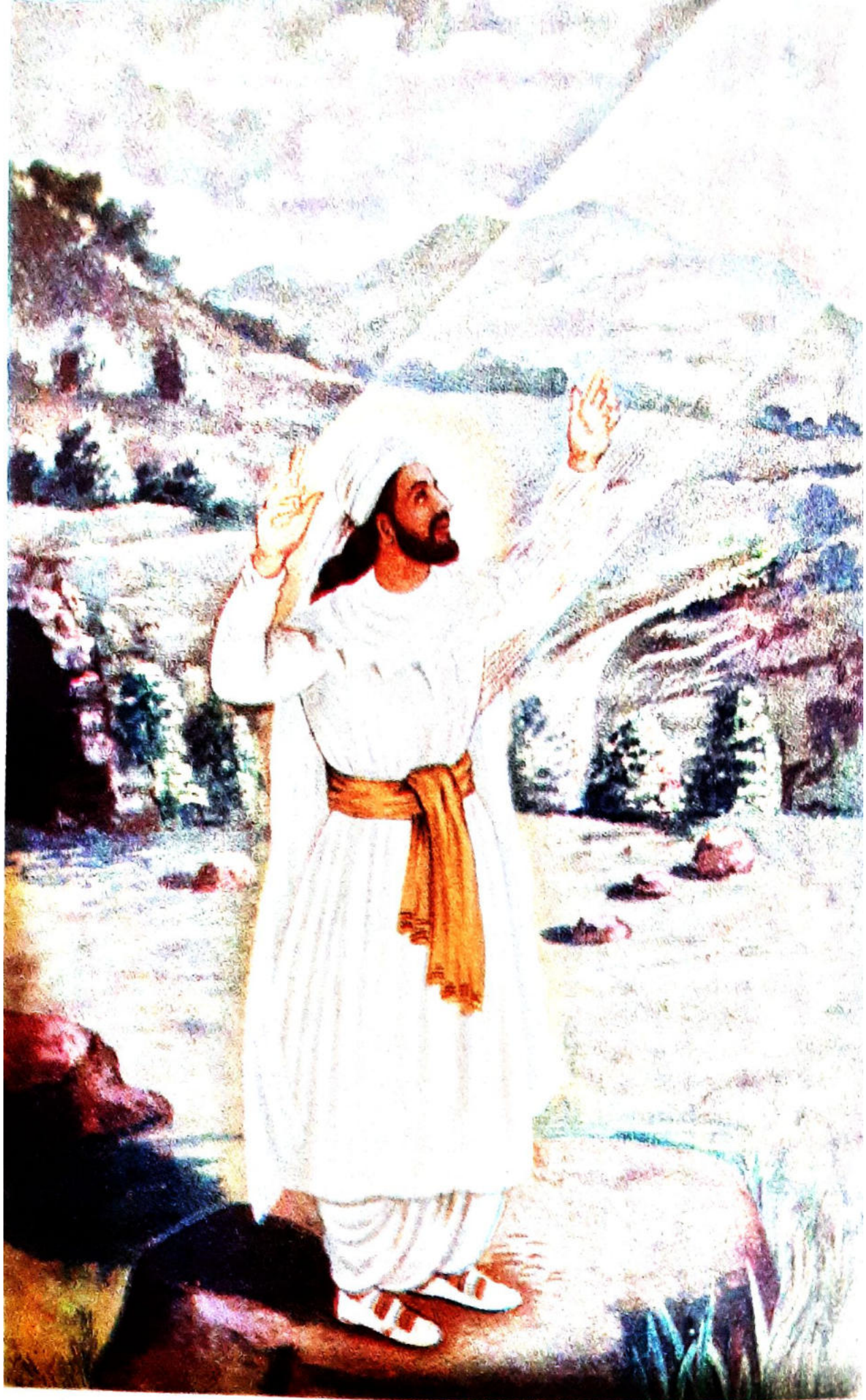


Dasturji Khurshed Shapoorji Dabu

IN MEMORY OF



Seth Merwanji Dadabhoy Chamarbaugvala



Heavenly Light descends on Zarathushtra on the Mount

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DASTUR KHURSHED S. DABU : M.A.F.T.S.



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FOREWORD

It has been the endeavour of the Board of Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet not only to keep our traditions alive but to disseminate the ideas, concepts, precepts and practices enshrined in our Holy Scriptures, and the Commentaries on those Scriptures, by the most erudite scholars, Parsis and non-Parsis alike.

For the benefit of the readers, I am happy to state that on the advice of Vada Dasturji Kaikhushru M. JamaspAsa and Dr. Homi Dhalla, the Board have consented to re-print the following 5 Titles mainly for the benefit of the Zoroastrian readers in India and abroad.

TITLE

1. The Religion of the Good Life - Zoroastrianism.
2. A Brief Sketch of the Zoroastrian Religion and Customs.
3. The Religious System of the Parsis.
4. Zarathushtra and His Teachings.
5. Handbook of Information on Zoroastrianism.

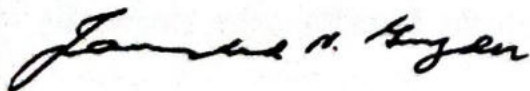
In order to reach our professed aim of disseminating this invaluable religious lore, as extensively as practicable, the Board of Trustees have decided to donate a few copies of each Title to the Zoroastrian Punchayets and Anjumans in India and to the Zoroastrian Associations in Pakistan, Iran and in the other parts of the world.

I take this opportunity to thank the following persons for being actively associated with this Project :

Vada Dasturji JamaspAsa

Dr. Homi Dhalla

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Mr. B. T. Dastur | - Chief Executive Officer,
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(J. N. GUZDER)

President

June 1, 2001

BTD/KHE

PREFACE

This Book is dedicated to the sacred and loving memory of my dear late father Seth Merwanji Dadabhoy Chamarbagwala, as a token of my love, respect and memory. With grateful thanks for the teaching which I owe to him in business as well as in religion.

This book has come out because of my good friend Keki P. N. Mehta who has taken lots of pain and trouble to see to it. Last but not the least, I must also thank Mr. Ardeshir Contractor who has taken a lot of pains to go through the copies and collect pictures and several materials.

Dasturji Khurshed S. Dabu has, for many years, been contributing a weekly article for the Monday edition of *Jam-e-Jamshed*. Of these some were specially written for young students. These were reprinted in book-form, with the help of the P. N. Mehta Educational Trust and the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. This Gujarati edition is now almost out of stock.

The publisher of this book thought it fit to bring out an English version of the above-mentioned publication, with alterations and additions; and Dasturji Dabu complied with our request to write it out. It has been a labour of love on his part, and I thank him for this selfless service.

I thank others who have helped in various ways: Mr. Parvez Chinoy of the Union Press, Bombay, has lent us, free of charge, several blocks of pictures. The picture on the cover-board is by an artist Mr. Homi Rajkotwalla of Asiart Advertising & Allied Services, who painted it specially for this book *gratis*. I thank all others who offered photographs as well as useful suggestions.

It should be made clear that very young children would need the help of parents and teachers to explain the contents of the book, which is meant for grown-up School and College Students, who eagerly seek information on our religion.

May it prove useful in achieving its purpose! This book will be given away free to *bonafide* people who need it and apply for it: P. N. Mehta Educational Trust, Thomas Cooks Building (2nd Floor), D. N. Road, Bombay 1.

R. M. D. Chamarbaugwala

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SECTION I

Background and Introductory Notes

ARYAN HOME OF AVESTA

Thousands of years ago, a new race, known as *The Aryan* (=noble in character) was settled somewhere near the middle-Asian valleys. They were distinguished from others (Negroids, Lemureans, Turanians, Tartars, Mongolians etc.) by their special outlook and behaviour, even in their peculiar physical features. After a long period of segregation, the Aryans branched out in various directions. One such group migrated to what later on began to be called *Iran* (Avestan name of the country is: *Arya-nam Vaejo* = The entrance of the Aryans). Everywhere there was opposition: For example: from The Dravidians in India, as from the Turanians in Iran. But they succeeded in establishing a new civilization and a new way of life. Their religion was known as *Mazdayasni Din* (=The faith in the worship of the Omniscient Lord). In those early days of settlement, kings were also the religious teachers (known as *Saoshyants* = The Benefactors of mankind). Jamshed, Faredoon, Minocher, Eruch, Kaikobad, Kaikhusru, Kai-Lahrasp etc., were a few of the Saoshyants, pertaining to the *Peshdadyan* and *Kyanian* dynasties of Iran's rulers. The aboriginal tribes owed allegiance to the *Devayasni* cult, worshipping demons and evil powers, and offering animal sacrifices to idols. While the mazdayasni Aryans had loving devotion to the Almighty and Omniscient God—the one source of existence, the apostates were guided by fear, and wished to placate angry devilish broods, that were supposed to be Nature's destructive forces. The two cults naturally clashed in many bloody battles, narrated in Firdausi's epic: *The Shahnameh*: Faredoon against Zohak, Kaikhusru against Afrasyab etc. During the reign of Kae-Vistasp, this conflict took a serious turn, because Durasarun (ac-

according to the traditional legends) was the leader of the terrorist gangs that thrived by plunder and arson throughout Iran, partly through their sinister influence at the royal Court. This is described in the 29th Chapter of the Gathas, wherein "The soul of the world (*Geush-Urva*)" is pictured as the plaintiff, at the highest Divine Tribunal of God, seeking redress and protection against such violent outrageous oppression. The petitioner prayed for "the appointment of a strong valiant hero, who could crush the criminals with his superior might". After due deliberation, *Ahuramazda* thought it fit to appoint (not a strong warrior, but) a holy gentle soul who (according to the Gatha:29) was "the only individual within the purview of God, who had properly understood the will and the plan of the Creator". It should be noted that the appointment or selection was announced *before* Zarathushtra was born, that is to say, when this great soul was still in paradise as a *Yazata*, an angelic being (according to Yasna 7) who was immortal! The divine call was humbly accepted by Zarathushtra to be the Redeemer of the world, saying: "I undertake the great task allotted to me, as my loving sacrifice unto you, O Lord!". Somehow that scheming gang came to know of God's decision, which was to put an end to their depredations. So they resolved to destroy him, even while he was a babe, taking advantage of the friendship and intimacy enjoyed by *Durasarun* in the home of *Paurushasp*—the father of the Divine child. Many attempts were made, but in none did they achieve their evil intent.

Biography of Zarathushtra

Zarathushtra (= *Zara*: golden + *thush*: shining + *Stra*: Star) actually illumined the place where he was born, with his divine effulgent aura. It is said that there was smile on his face (instead of the usual cry) at birth. *Fravardin yasht* describes how the entire Nature was jubilant with the consciousness, that her saviour was now about to resume his duties. At the same time, the terrorists were in mourning, expecting their downfall.

He was born in *Balkh* (Bactria) during the reign of *Vish-tasp*. Mother was *Dogdo* and Father: *Paurushasp* of the priestly family of *Spitama*, born in the town of *Rae*, near the river

Vehdaiti, in the province of Azarbaezan, on the day: Khurdad of the month: Fravardin (now known as the festival of *Khurdadsal*). It is not quite certain as to the exact year of his dispensation, but many Greek historians put the date between 6400 and 7000 Before Christ. According to the Avestan scriptures, his successors to the pontifical throne, should have been known as *Zarathushtratema*, but with the passage of time the title was shortened, causing confusion as to the distinct identity of the First Prophet and messenger: and so the several biographies of the succeeding pontiffs have thus got mixed up. But the "Bactrian Sage" is quite different from the one believed to have played his part in Persipolis during the Achaemenian dynasty. Historical, geographical and linguistic distinctions are quite apparent to prove the point.

The various pranks by his enemies

(1) Durasarun plotted to have the child killed without causing suspicion against his own party. He had free access to Paurushasp's house. His first attempt was to show that the child got burnt on a pyre of burning faggots (as if by accident, but actually conspired by his minions). *Asha-Vahishta* the archangel, caused the embers to get cold, so that mother Dogdo during her search, found the son playfully enjoying the strange outdoor bed!

(2) They then placed the babe in a lane frequented by cattle, with the intent that it could get trampled to death. But the Archangel Behman inspired a gentle cow (*Purmaye*) to stand guard over the child, while other heads passed out of the lane. Dogdo later recovered the child not suspecting the real leaders of the plot.

(3) A similar attempt was made placing the child in another passage, where horses used to pass on their way to the grazing-ground. Then the Angel Dravasp caused a stallion to remain as a shield over the prostrate child, till the whole lot passed out to the end.

(4) Durasarun, foiled in his plots to utilise domestic animals, now decided to use savage wolves to devour the babe in a dis-

tant den. While the she-wolf was away, her cubs were killed by his servants, hoping that the sight of her dead cubs would so infuriate the beast, that she would wreak revenge on the human child placed near her den. (He hoped to spread the rumour that a hungry wolf entered the house and carried away the child). But the jaws of the wild beast got a severe cramp, and she went off into the jungle full of pain and anguish. For two days Zarathushtra could not be traced. He would have died of hunger and thirst, exposed to the elements of Nature. But angels *Meher* and *Sraosha* came to the rescue, in the guise of milch-goats suckling the babe, until Dogdo's servants succeeded in recovering the kidnapped child! It is certainly a miracle for two goats to be found near a wolves' den! But Ahuramazda was (and always is) the Omnipotent guardian of all true souls in His service.

(5) Durasrun now got frustrated and frightened. So he tried to expose himself in his true colours by deciding to murder the child himself, while the parents were away. His deadly dagger was poised to strike, when Behram the guardian angel, caused his hands to be paralysed and permanently so twisted, that thenceforward he could never use them, and he ate or drank like wild beasts from plates placed before him!

(6) *Zoroaster* (which was the name used by the Greeks) grew up to be an intelligent boy. A final attempt was then made to poison him with some drugs, presented by a Durasrun's agent disguised as a physician. But Zoroaster could discern the trick, and declined to take "the medicine".

His early training

Zarathushtra was trying to solve many deep problems of life by study, and through enquiries from great *savants* of his time, called the *Magavans* in the Gathas (The *Magi* of the Greeks). He was initiated into the occult mysteries of the Mazdayasni religion. But he could not approve of some of the then prevailing customs. At the age of twenty five, he felt that he should retire to a secluded spot for deeper meditation and contemplation of God's plan. So he chose a cave near a shepherd's hut; and for ten years he was trying to "hold converse" inwardly with

God, so that he would have all the mysteries revealed within his intuitive faculty. The shepherd helped him daily with free gift of milk and bread. Some of the queries during his inner search, have been preserved in the Gathas (specially chapter 44). On one occasion, he expresses an ardent desire "to have a clear vision of God, and to hold interrogation with the Creator." He has acknowledged his indebtedness to the leading angel *Sraosha* (intermediary at the Court of God, entitled to a place in the Archangels' assembly) who helped him to clarify many points that used to puzzle him. It is said that *Sraosha* recited those sacred hymns (the *Gathas*) that Zarathushtra later on sang before his congregation. During these years of search, Satan wished to thwart him by presenting various temptations and threats (see *Vendidad* chapter XIX). When Zarathushtra scorned the offer by Satan, of a kingly rank, he was countered with a threat to destroy him. But the great Prophet stood firm, and told Satan that with the help of Ahuramazda, the final victory was to be on the side of Truth and Purity. When Zoroaster finally got assured, that he had a very clear revelation (*Daena*) from God, about the message that he was appointed to preach, he left the mountain-resort, and prepared to visit the royal court, where those *Devayasni* terrorists were still enjoying some favour and patronage.

At the royal court

King Gushtasp has been depicted in the Gathas as a saintly soul; but in the legends he is shown to be vacillating and hesitant. When Zarathushtra requested the King to help in the propagation of the new message, he put forth several preliminary conditions to be fulfilled: (1) That Zarathushtra should enter into debates with those apostates, so as to prove that the new message was superior and flawless. When this was done, those *Devaysnis* had to beat retreat from the Court in disgrace. (2) Gushtasp demanded that some miraculous tokens be shown to prove that Zoroaster was the true messenger from God. (a) So a wonderful ball of fire was shown, which continued to glow without any fuel, and which did not scorch one's palm when held in it, (b) A live plant was submitted, on the leaves of which was Nature's carved recommendation, that the King should patronise the new faith, (c) When

Gushtasp demanded that he should be specifically enjoined to this effect by angels pertaining to the Court of God, his request was granted, first through a dream, and then again in his waking state, by angels Adar and Sraosha, who personally sought audience and reassured the King.

Those wizards owing allegiance to Durasarun, once again plotted to discredit Zarathushtra (who used to preach that in the true worship of God, only pure offerings should be presented and such foul substances as were used in black magic, should be discarded). So they secretly placed such putrid articles under his bed, to show that Zarathushtra was himself a follower of the dark path. A search was ordered by the King, who was credulous enough to believe in the false allegations. Consequently Zarathushtra was ordered to be imprisoned as an imposter and a false prophet. It so happened that the King's favourite steed was disabled through palsey, and none could cure it of the malady. Zarathushtra was then requested to try his healing art; but he stipulated certain conditions for the King's acceptance: (a) that the King should duly try and punish those who had hatched this plot to harm his probity. (b) that the King with his entire family should help Zarathushtra to spread his message far and wide. (c) that the new religion should receive the State's patronage, and acceptance be sought from the subjects of the realm. When these terms were accepted, the horse was treated and restored to health. Gushtasp then willingly supported Zarathushtra in his noble efforts.

Propagation of the new religion

Amongst the first apostles of Zoroastrianism were: (1) The Prophets' cousin Maidyomah (2) Prince Spendyar, who was granted a boon to have his physical body invulnerable to weapons. (3) Jamasp, who received the gift of prevision, so that he could foretell events to happen in the future. (4) Prince Peshotan who was so holy and perfect, that he attained immortality during his chief's life-time. There are legends in our sacred books, that he with his 151 companions, still keeps watch over Iran, from his secret monastery in mount Alburz, and helps those earnest souls that tread the path prescribed by Zarathushtra. (5) There were others (including *Frashoshtra*) whose work has been commended in the

Gathas by the Prophet himself—the Queen—and the members of the royal family, who took active part in spreading the new gospel.

There was a neighbouring ruler Arjasp (Turani by clan) who, protesting against this movement, invaded Iran to force Gushtasp to forswear his new allegiance. While the armed conflict was raging outside, Zarathushtra was absorbed in his devotions within a holy temple. A Turani soldier, Turbaratur by name, fatally stabbed the Prophet within the shrine. It was the day: Khurshed of the month Dae, when Zarathushtra was 77 years and 40 days old. The Turani army was defeated, but Iran had lost a most precious soul. It is known that Jamasp succeeded to the Pontifical throne as "Zarathushtratema", and led the religious movement with the help of the royal Court.

* * * * *

His Message

As we intend to deal with this subject in detail, in the next few chapters, only a few salient points can be touched here: (1) There were some good customs and practices of the Mazdayasni faith then prevailing. These were retained by Zarathushtra with slight alterations, so that even now we call this religion "Mazdayasni-Zarathushtri". (These were: the four professional groups—The uniform of *Sudreh-Kushti* distinguishing a Mazdayasni—The installation of fire-altars in temples—The six *Gahambar* festivals of thanksgiving—Purity and cleanliness of all elements of nature etc.) (2) All alien traces of Devayasni cult were eliminated. (3) Five fundamental new principles were formulated:—(a) *Goodness*, (b) *Unity* in diversity to avoid dissensions, (c) *Freedom* of conscience without outer compulsion, (d) *Utter self-denial* so as to be charitable and magnanimous and (e) *Absolute purity* and integrity in one's behaviour, so that a Zoroastrian's life (physical moral mental and spiritual) reflected godliness. (4) Four daily duties were prescribed: (a) loving sacrifice unto the Lord, of one's best gifts. (b) acceptance of Zarathushtra's guidance in matters spiritual. (c) struggle against all temptations and handicaps

of life, befitting a soldier of Ahuramazda; and (d) absolute faith in God's decrees in weal and woe. (5) Laws were codified (as in the *Vendidad*) to preserve health as well as one's ethical flawless conduct.

This faith is erroneously called Parsi Religion. *Pars*, as a prosperous province of Iran, had not then come into prominence, when Zoroaster preached his message. Zoroaster was accordingly not a Parsi!

The entire message was ordered to be inscribed on hundreds of parchments. Two sets were prepared: One for the palace Library—later burnt through Alexander's negligence; and the other for the Treasure-house, which was taken away by the Macedonian army officers. Only a few scraps could then be salvaged from the priests' collections, later supplemented by recoveries through the gracious help of the Parthian Viceroy Vologesis III. From these bits, Dasturji Tosar, under orders from the first Sassanian King Ardeshir Papakan, recompiled 21 volumes (Dinkard gives summary of the contents of all these.) Unfortunately even these have not been saved! Dasturji Adarbad and his assistant prepared Pahlavi-Pazend translations and commentaries (*Zend* from Avesta) and Dasturji Nairyosangh could translate some portions into Sanskrit. But we have irrecoverably lost nearly 6/7 of our original scriptures; and so it should be the duty of every Zoroastrian carefully to preserve what is left. After the Arab conquest of Iran, many Parsis migrated to India to preserve their precious heritage. There are about 120000 Parsi Zoroastrians in India, while there are still about 20000 Zoroastrians in Iran and elsewhere.

Having recorded some relevant information about Zarathushtra, let us now proceed to learn more about his message, in the next sections:



SECTION II

SOME DEFINITIONS

(1) *Parsi*: About twelve centuries ago, our ancestors had Iran as their motherland. Fars (Pars, Pers) was a province of that country. When the Arabs conquered Iran, defeating our last emperor Yazdegard, their intolerance and bigotry made it difficult for Zoroastrians to follow their ancestral religion. Many of them preferred to migrate to other countries, forsaking their wealth property and relatives. Some who remained there, were forcibly converted to Islam. Those (mainly from Khorasan) who came to India by land and sea-routes, were refugees coming from Pars. Their mother-tongue was *Farsi* (Persian) and they were called *Parsi Zoroastrians*. Those who came away much later, called themselves *Iranis*. The whole of Iran used to be called *Persia*, since the capital of Achaemenian kings was at Persipolis. We continue to be called *Parsis*, though for centuries we have resided in India, and are Indians by nationality. *Iranis* too are "*Parsis*" as interpreted by law, in India.

(2) *Zoroastrian (Zarathoshti)*: Because we retain the ancient religion preached by Zarathushtra, we are also known as *Zarathostis*. At the time when our Prophet gave his message, Balkh (Bactria) and not Persipolis, was the capital of Iran, where Kyanyan rulers were famous for their justice and wisdom. The term for religion used by us, is *Din* (Avesta = *Daena*). It implies a revelation from God, through His accredited messenger Zarathushtra, who "saw" before his mind's eyes, the entire plan and will of God. It was promulgated in the language of that time (about 8000 years ago) known as *Avesta*. This language is Aryan, akin to Sanskrit. Later, our entire scriptural lore also came to be called *Avesta*; and *Khurdeh Avesta* consists of selections and extracts from the larger volumes of the original texts, with later additions.

(3) *Mazdayasni*: (Mazda = The omniscient Lord + *Yasni* = worshipping) should be the term to distinguish all monotheists, believing in the One Intelligent source of life. However it was

the special appellation of those in Iran (before the advent of Zarathushtra) who followed the sacred teachings of Peshdadyan and Kyani Kings, known as *Saoshyants*. Zarathushtra (as pointed out in the previous chapter) retained many of the good features of Mazdayasni faith; hence, in our "Creed", we still declare ourselves as "Mazdayasni-Zarthoshtis". It should be noted that the term is to distinguish ourselves from the *Devayasnis* (also known as *Drawant* = "the Vagrants, not on the path of purity") whose worship was offered to many demoniacal powers. The word *Daeva* in Avesta (derived from *Deb* = to deceive) referred to false entities, exalted as so many gods, who mis-directed people treading the path of *Ashoi* (Truth). It was far from one's willing adoration from a loving heart, but a forced submission through fear of evil consequences. We as Mazdayasnis are enjoined to recognise the One Supreme Creator. In the wedding ceremony, there is the exhortation: "Always be of strong faith and good nature! Recognise Ahuramazda as your Lord and master! Praise Zarathushtra as your guide! and Abhor Ahriman (Satan) as a deceiver!"

* * * * *

(4) Understanding the Dual Nature of the Universe:

We would find the dual aspect of everything around us: Life and Form, Birth and Death, increase and decrease, light and darkness, Truth and Falsehood, the Permanent and the Transitory, joy and sorrow, health and disease, plenty and famine etc. In Yasna 60, we pray that the former aspects may achieve victory over the latter. The universe has "*Gaeti-minoani*" i.e. material or corporeal form, as well as the spiritual essence. Man has (*Tani-Rovani*) = physical vestures and its inner ensouling life. Behind every moving material form, there is life and also consciousness. Man has a mortal body but also an evolving grade of intelligence. Thus duality (or polarity) is the general rule in all beings. But Zarathushtra enjoined us to preserve the eternal bliss, even at the expense of the ephemeral pleasures of senses. We might be tempted by the glamour of earthly possessions; but a Zoroastrian has to resist such attractions and seek (through charity) the welfare of the soul, now

and hereafter. *Sin* is defined as "corrosion". So we must look to our spiritual strength as *Vidaeva* = "those opposing the false deceptive form". An ignorant child may not distinguish between a diamond and a bit of crystal. But as our power of discrimination develops, we get wiser. We should therefore remember that (1) our soul would feel sorry if we fall a prey to false pleasures of the carnal senses. (2) Our life here (however prolonged) is not everlasting. (3) Our soul is a sojourner from the spiritual realms down here; and has to return to his "spiritual home" on the expiry of a given span of life. (4) Our real happiness pertains to heaven. In order to attain that, it is God's scheme, that we get lasting reward of good thoughts words and deeds ultimately. (5) We lose real pure inner joy in seeking gratifications of a gross nature. (6) Our spiritual strength is enhanced in resisting temptations, and using our rational faculty to distinguish between the true and the false. (7) In trying to gratify our senses, we may injure the true balance and peace of our soul. (8) Our religion declares that "the path of profit (*Sud-reh*)" lies in pursuing our intuitive directions (*Baodhangh*). Otherwise we invite pain and misery through our wanton behaviour. (9) We are often tested as to our spiritual stamina, through temptations. Our resistance would gradually increase that power of our will. We, therefore, offer the prayer: "May Ahuramazda rejoice by our correct conduct! May Satan be vanquished and hated"! (10) This life on earth has been rightly compared to a brief visit to a hotel! We have to pass on to our "home" some day; and our stay there would certainly be much longer than the one down here. We have to render our account to the "Auditor-General in Heaven;" and blessed are those who have no regrets or repentance for lost opportunities to do good here. (11) Appearances are deceptive. What tickles our senses, may bring disease and destruction. Even in extolling the bad deeds of evil persons, we may be dragged down in our moral aptitude. So we should try and abstain from seeing seductive pictures, or listening to lewd stories, or keeping company of licentious people. A student should devote all his time and energy to his real avocation: learning! Once the mental apparatus is injured through undesirable passions, it is not possible to be truly educated. Acrobats e.g. Tight-rope walkers, preserve their bodily balance so skillfully.

We should similarly try to maintain our stability of head and heart by daily practice in our normal duties. (12) If we belong to the army of Ahura, fighting against Satan, our duty would be to abstain from destructive habits. Those who are involved in injuring others, do always harm their own future welfare also. Meritorious deeds deserve proper reward, but *sin* is like corrosive acid, destroying our moral fibre. If our own rational faculty is not well-developed, we may justly seek advice of experts, who have had experience in the past. Sin robs us of our good reputation and saps up our self-respect. Righteous conduct can make angels of us all. Satan seeks feeble minds and hearts for his mischief. So if we are ever engaged in selfless deeds, he could be foiled; because we would have naturally no intention to fall a prey to his guiles.



SECTION III

Our attitude to our Religion and its commandments :

Why do we need any religion?

There is a proverb: "Man cannot live by bread alone", implying that beyond our material wants, even if we are well-fed, there is within us a feeling of something missing. There are our hopes and aspirations; and until they are fulfilled, we would always feel some void, without realising that we seek to regain our "lost paradise". Material pleasures do not satisfy the soul, because it too needs to be fed and nourished in a different manner. Love, devotion, knowledge, selfless service, courage, patience and other virtues are the sources of spiritual sustenance. We live in a world, the major part of which is invisible and intangible. We cannot acquire knowledge of the "other world" through our five senses, which do not help us beyond a certain limit. Even our mind has a limited scope for speculations, wherein we may indulge in our fancies. So only those, whose "inner vision" is so developed as to get first-hand information of the occult world, can guide us with their personal experience and testimony. In the Gathas, a spiritual guide (Ratu) is supposed to be thoroughly acquainted *with both the worlds* (Dam-Ahubish). Thus a Prophet is like a specialist in those matters of which we cannot get correct knowledge unaided.

(1) Religion is not confined to the scriptures! The Indian word *Dharma* literally implies "a supporting pillar", some conviction that sustains our life during times of stress and pressing problems. Thus Dharma should prove an uplifting force strengthening our faith in God's dispensations. Mere lip-beliefs cannot help us where inner convictions only can dispel doubts.

(2) The Avestan word *Daena* (=Din) implies an inner vision through inspiration or intuition. It is what the great Seers and Saints actually "perceived" through their gift of "third sight" or "sixth sense". Just as a researcher with his microscope, can relate what we cannot see with our unaided eyes, so can these

spiritual experts reveal the secrets of the occult world, through their trained insight. Thus *Din* is a report of the unseen and intangible world, by one competent to discover it.

(3) The Arabic word *Mazhab* means a path. We have to tread some special pathway leading to a summit. There may be many more such paths, but only one of them all, is most suitable to a traveller from his starting point. We, moreover, need a guide along the route to save us from waste of time and energy. The great Teachers of religion have therefore submitted for our information a chart to guide us to our Heavenly Home. Such a chart is provided by a religion.

(4) The English word *Religion* is meant to remind us that though we are far away from paradise, there is still a divine link, with us all, wherewith we are being steadily drawn back to God. He prescribes certain rules and regulations to live a life so as to strengthen this tie, and ultimately lead to re-union with The Divine Source. Religion is thus a cord with which we are pulled up gradually approaching our Creator for "atonement".

Questions dealt with by religion :

These various terms show how religion is essential for our spiritual progress. Pups are born blind and helpless. They are entirely dependant on their mother's guidance. Similarly we who are unable to visualise the other world, need guidance from prophets and seers, with regard to occult matters. These great messengers, having first-hand knowledge of the other world, did provide essential information, which they had obtained by special faculties developed through a pure disciplined life. God, the gracious Father, sends such great souls from time to time, to guide us aright during our ignorance of several problems which puzzle us. We can never rest content till we have solved all these questions of great importance. e.g. (1) God's existence, His nature and His aims. (2) Why was the universe created? How was it brought into existence and maintained intact? What are the laws of nature, whereby stars proceed on their way, plants grow in accordance with a plan, birds and beasts lead a life along fixed lines of growth? How to utilise all powers and forces of Nature (Light,

heat, steam, electricity, magnetism etc.) so as to help our fellow beings? What should be done to keep nature pure and clean, so that filth may not affect our lives adversely? (3) Where was man before he was born? What would be his plight after what we call bodily death? What is Man's final destiny? (4) What are our essential duties towards God, to our parents and elders, to our younger and less developed fellows, and even to ourselves? Is it possible to formulate rules of conduct for a life of innocence and beneficence? (5) What must be the nature of invisible helpers (angels, Nature-spirits etc.) who are supposed to guide us? How can we draw to us their influence, and ingratiate them? How would our soul grow in wisdom, compassion, peace, devotion and service, so as to attain perfection in the end? and how should we live so as to be re-united with God (*Hamem - hakhma*) once for all?

These and many similar questions, if rightly answered, should enable us to plan our course of life aright and to achieve the final goal thereof. We would particularly like to know how our wanton behaviour displeases God; and what are man's transgressions as laid down by our religion? A steamer or a plane needs a chart to help the pilot along the right course, and to warn him of concealed bedrocks and obstructing hills. Religion is such a chart to save us from destruction. Those who disregard warnings given in the chart, would wreck their life. The great Prophets are expert guides; and they have issued warnings so that we may be alert in time. Deep repentance should be our lot if we disregard them.

Chief principles of our religion

Religion should be a living force in our life, and should not be confined to a study of scriptural texts. In other words, our *behaviour* should indicate if religion is permeating it on all occasions. Some hypocrites may deceive others by assuming a guise of "religiosity", and outward piety. But God cannot be deceived that way. A truly religious man would be unassuming and humble. He would not lead a double life (saint in appearance, but sinner really). Even great proficiency in philosophy and me-

taphysics (which a Pandit is supposed to acquire) would not be the sole criterion of religious life. Religion should be like a perfume spreading sweet influence through each thought word and deed. "Too much reading may be the weariness of the soul" as Bacon has said; and a pious man may be mediocre in intellectual attainments, but may be truly honest and helpful with a loving heart. Blessed are those who are pure and innocent at heart like babes.

Zarathushtra has laid down some virtues, which each one of his followers must show in daily conduct. A very high code of moral conduct is evident therein:—(1) Each Zoroastrian must be good and beneficent in conduct towards all around him. He cannot injure the interests of any man or living being. Goodness should permeate our intentions and even wishes. Our speech has to be sweet true and beneficial. "Goodness is Godliness" and a true Zoroastrian should be a ministering angel to all. God is so gracious in providing our needs without any expectation of a reward. So should we radiate goodness every moment of our life. The word *Beh-din* (Avesta: *Vanghuhim Daenam*) should distinguish a Zoroastrian as "one of good faith," as it inspires him to be benevolent and beneficent.

(2) A Zoroastrian always tries to avoid unnecessary dissensions, as he is asked to be "a bridge over a gulf dividing two sects", by seeing the underlying unity, inspite of conflicting viewpoints. He is a peacemaker and would recognise some truth in every aspect of many-sided arguments. "To see the other fellow's viewpoint" needs great tact and power of persuasion. Sympathetic understanding would be the result of unprejudiced perception. That way, one can promote peace and amity.

(3) A Zoroastrian should never force his own opinion or belief on another, as there is freedom of conscience for each one of us. "Forced conversions" are never successful or long-lasting. In matters of inner convictions no threat of violence can have the slightest effect. Zoroaster's very first sermon (Gatha 30) asks each one of the audience to use his or her "light of reason", and then formulate one's own belief. While the Persian empire had its limits expanded to many countries, never was force

used to compel the conquered nations to accept the message of Zarathushtra. Truth, when perceived freely and voluntarily, has a firm foundation in one's heart. This is one of the principles of true education also.

(4) The Zoroastrian doctrine of self-sacrifice (*Khaetwadath*) enjoins all of us to consider the welfare of others before that of our own. We grow by giving and not by acquisitive greed. We are trustees of what we possess and should willingly share our gifts with others. Wealth is only a "sense of well-being", and this is enhanced through participation by many. Charity (Derivatively="Love") is a special virtue amongst the Parsis, because they think it their duty to improve the lot of those, who are not so fortunate in many directions. The axiom laid down by Zarathushtra is: "If you wish to be happy, make others happy"! In proportion as we render others happy, are we entitled to similar bounty from God. All merits are supposed to be deposited with God's Bank (*Ganj-e-Dādar*), and without such deposits we have no right to pray for personal comforts. Learning, art, prestige and skill should be considered as "Wealth", and should be shared equitably amongst all who need the same. A selfish greedy man shuts himself off from God's grace.

(5) The fifth virtue *Asha* is so comprehensive in its field, that the term carries many implications. Its derivative meaning is: uprightness or integrity; but it also means absolute purity: physical, moral, mental and spiritual. Hygiene and sanitation would fall under the first category. Truth, compassion, balance, justice, love and courage would be the result of the purity of heart and conscience. The antonym of *Asha* is *Druj* which implies deceptive habits that injure the soul.

(6) As we happen to be Mazdayasni, we are morally bound to be grateful to God for all His mercies. But real gratitude would prompt us to be helpful to Him: "I serve because my Father in Heaven labours constantly". The correct Zoroastrian term for our adoration is not prayer (=Begging or petitioning) but *Bandagi*=The attitude of a faithful servant to his Master: Complete submission to His decrees. "God is wise and omniscient, therefore may that happen to us as He wills" (Gatha: 29).

A conscientious servant is eager to take upon his own shoulders, a little of the huge labour that God the master has to undertake. God is, moreover, so gracious in overlooking many of our faults. So should a Mazdayasni be tolerant and liberal in his dealings with others. He should be alert to seize all opportunities of promoting his community's welfare. "He also serves, who stands and waits" (Milton).

(7) Then as we have to be loyal disciples of Zarathushtra whose guidance in matters spiritual must be sought in difficult situations, the discipline of life prescribed by our Prophet has to be willingly gone through with the assurance, that it would lead to our spiritual progress. Absolute trust in the commander is required of every soldier; and yet we are asked to ponder deeply over our religious injunctions.

(8) If we have undertaken to fight against evil (renouncing the Daevayasni temptations) we have to be prepared for tests and trials, during our struggle against handicaps such as poverty, disease, frustrations and occasional set-backs. Constant vigilance is needed against the wiles of Satan in the same manner, as did Zarathushtra withstand all temptations.

(9) God's laws are just and benevolent. His kingdom is ruled wisely. Whatever betide, weal or woe, our trust and faith in His dispensation should never waver. Even Pain may prove a teacher, and there are no accidental lapses in His just administration. We must therefore live without doubts and without any grouse against whatever may befall us. Even saints and Prophets have cheerfully undergone severe ordeals in the conviction, that "blessed are those who suffer meekly". Nothing goes amiss in Mazda's empire based on justice and equity.



SECTION IV

Some queries regarding Customs:

Why should we put on "Sudreh-Kushti"?

Each group that desires to be identified, as owing allegiance or affiliation to a cause or department of service, wears a badge or some uniform to distinguish it from other groups. In large concourse of people, it is necessary to proclaim certain powers and privileges of a brigade or corps, by means of such badges. In Iran, the Mazdayasnis had such a uniform, which, because of its religious significance, was held to be sacred, so that even kings used to wear the same with due reverence. We, who call ourselves *Vidaeva* = "fighting against evil", are soldiers of Ahura's army. There are the memorable lines of prayer by Samuel Lang:—

Grant me, O Ahura, in Thy ranks to stand—
A valiant soldier—faithful to the end!

We have to fight against various handicaps and even vices such as anger, envy, lust greed etc. that are our "enemies". It is more difficult to defeat these inner enemies, as we have tolerated them for long, and encouraged their evil influences. We may be upset any moment, when we are off our guard. So it is a ceaseless struggle. To remind us constantly that we are valiant soldiers, we wear the two emblems. They proclaim to the outer world, our allegiance to Mazda; and we further derive psychological strength from within, to resist temptations. They are thus symbols of a brave struggle under the banner of Ahura Mazda. We put on *Sudreh* and *Kushti* as our "military uniform" partly to derive constant incentive to be courageous, and also to declare our affiliation to the army of God, in the cause of Righteousness. Scouts, sailors, soldiers, fire-fighters etc. do put on their badges, with some sense of pride in belonging to a glorious band of servers. There is nothing "old-fashioned" or retrograde in wearing them, in a world, where God's army has a never-ending conflict to engage in. We call ourselves *Baste-Kushtian* soldiers; and

amongst the Parsis, this uniform should promote fellow-feeling and brotherhood, if its significance is understood.

Sudreh is a shirt, spotless white, to signify blameless conduct. Our ancestors called it our "armour", against the weapons of Satan. The term is a compound of *Sud*=beneficial + *Reh*=path; indicating that the path of *Ashoi* is to be trodden by every Zoroastrian, in order to gain sure reward in heaven. Onto this shirt is tacked, near the bosom, a small pocket with dual symbolic significance. It is called *Giroban* or pocket of *faith*, to remind us that in times of difficulty our inner faith should prove a source of encouragement. It has another name: "pocket to collect meritorious deeds". It reminds the wearer of the final judgment, when we have to submit to God our record of behaviour in life on earth; and thereby stand to be suitably vindicated if "the pocket" is well-filled.

Kushti is a girdle or sash or a sort of "sword-belt" of a soldier. In girding up one's loins one remains "awake and prepared" against sudden onslaughts from the enemy. It has to be tied in three loops round the waist with four knots, two in front two behind. These are to remind the soldier of his four daily obligations; The three loops remind us of the Creator, the Preserver and the Reconstructor aspects of God. The knots are reminders of our four duties: (a) Worship of God with self-sacrifice (b) Loyal obedience to the behests of Zarathushtra. (c) Constant struggle against evil and (d) Absolute confidence in God's laws and decrees. The two ends of the sash are to signify the dual nature of the universe, and we are asked to be careful to prefer the eternal over the ephemerary aspects, knowing that truth will always prevail and be victorious. We have, however, to deal with, and be quite familiar with both aspects: form and life. Form is essential for manifestation of life; and even though our body is mortal, also for traversing the ocean of life here.

Suppose some Zoroastrian declines to put these sacred emblems on! Then he is the loser. He would not derive benefit from such mementos during times of difficulties. He loses an opportunity to proclaim openly his loyalty to an ancient noble faith. He would also lose the sense of security engendered by

the mind, seeing these "fortifying" symbols, while facing temptations and allurements.

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The Significance of the Navzote Ritual:

The formal ceremony of admission of a candidate to the Zoroastrian fold, known as *Navzote*, has a double purpose: (1) The priests, relatives and friends invited on the occasion, are witnesses to the declaration of the candidate's "creed". This formal declaration is necessary, so that the neophyte may be duly admitted and granted his or her communal rights and privileges. The "creed" contains the announcement, that the new initiate accepts the religion revealed by God to Zarathushtra, because "he or she finds it true and reasonable, showing the path of purity and benevolence, and also as it inculcates worship of Ahura-mazda as the Supreme Ruler". The congregation having approved of this open declaration, the leading-priest then offers him the two sacred emblems of the community: "Sudreh and Kushti". It is an occasion of rejoicing, because a "new worshipper" has been added to the ranks of Mazdayasnis. This solemn declaration, made with free will and accord, should prove a great step in the spiritual progress of the candidate. In Iran, the holy rite is called *Naozad*, implying that it is an occasion for the neophyte's "new birth" into a responsible way of life. (Amongst the Hindus, the candidate, after such investiture, is known as "Twice-born"). The first birth is that of the physical body from parents; but this second one is a sort of awakening of the soul, who thereafter resumes the reins of his future moral career. (2) Having gone through this ceremony, the neophyte is *Parsi* by birth and *Zoroastrian* by choice. All benefits of communal institutions (Temples, schools, hospitals, etc.) are thereafter openly available to the new entrant, as a beneficiary of all legal Trust deeds enacted for "Parsi-Zoroastrians only".

The formal ceremony has four parts: (1) *The Sacred ablution*, preparing the neophyte with purity of the body, and also attuning his mind, so as to benefit from blessings and higher influ-

ences. He or she accepts sacramental drink during this part of the ritual.

(2) The solemn declaration of the Creed (above mentioned) and granting of the first emblem *Sud-reh* is the next step.

(3) Recitation of prescribed texts, during which *Kushti* is wound round the waist in the proper manner. Then there is a longer recitation from Avesta (Yasna Chapter XII) wherein are enumerated the unique fundamental principles of our religion.

(4) Then the initiating priest showers blessings on the candidate, conjointly with some moral precepts. Thenceforward the new entrant has to fulfill certain daily duties. Both Parsi boys and girls are initiated with a uniform ritual, while amongst the Hindus, only the males of higher castes are put through "the thread-ceremony = *Yagnopavit*" which has some features similar to ours. During this holy rite, fire is kept burning as a symbol of God's presence during the solemn pledge.

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The Catholicity of Zoroastrian religion

(1) Truth has no limitations of time and space. The eternal verities are the same at all places and in all ages. The message preached by Zarathushtra was meant to be a world-religion, as it embraced immutable Divine laws applicable to humanity. For example: the law of Adjustment or Retribution has a universal application (*viz*: "As you sow, so shall you reap"). Therefore, in Avesta: Haftayasht, there is a very remarkable statement which every Zoroastrian makes openly:—"We (the Zoroastrians) are lovers and acceptors of *all* good thoughts, words and deeds, whether performed here or elsewhere, now or at any other time in the future, *because* we are ever the supporters of goodness"! Thus because we support goodness in all its aspects, we cannot restrict our faith to a fixed time and place. If a thought, to be proclaimed five centuries hence, is to be pure and beneficial, it cannot be excluded from the purview of Zoroastrianism.

(2) In the longer declaration (from Yasna XII) we promise to praise all good thoughts words and deeds. The same declaration is made in "*Frastuye*" (Part of "*Ahuramazda Yasht*"), that we would uphold all good thoughts words and deeds, and renounce all evil ones.

(3) In the past we rejected all such speculative dogmas as were not good for the world at large; for example: the doctrines of Mazdak and Mani. Similarly the Parsis refused to renounce their faith, when the Arab rulers forced their doctrines on them, and so they preferred to migrate from their motherland.

(4) In India, Parsis have been living, for over 12 centuries, in the midst of numerous races and creeds, with a tolerant feeling towards all good principles and practices of life. There is now in vogue, considerable exchange of comparative study of all religions between the Parsis and others.

(5) It has to be remembered, that having lost so many scriptural volumes, we cannot assert with certainty, that such and such a doctrine was never propounded by ancient leaders of Zoroastrian thought. At the same time, we cannot accept without mature study and examination, all such dogmas as are new but not sound, in their ethical and spiritual content. Science may reveal new vistas of knowledge, but eternal truths would never be swept aside, because modern scientists are now full of reverence for ancient wisdom. After all, the progress of science would verify many old spiritual doctrines; and ultimately knowledge would be judged from the correct and helpful behaviour of those who profess it. Zarathushtra, in the Gathas, enumerates some Divine laws and adds: "This shall be the truth prevailing, right upto the end of the world". The Catholicity of our religion is calculated to promote universal peace amity and brotherhood.



SECTION V

(a) *The significance and utility of Temples of worship:*

We are considering Temples as "Houses of God". All religious communities do so; but God as all-pervading Omnipotent Deity, has no circumscribed location or residence. The whole of Nature and the Universe must indicate His presence and craftsmanship therein. Parsis are perhaps "Nature-worshippers," that is to say, they pay homage to the Creator perceived through observing His Creation. In that "*namaskar*" we turn to all the four cardinal points, and enumerate His various objects that remind us of His skill and immanence: (Mountains-ocean-stars-the sun-the forests and gardens—the vast earth that sustains us..... etc.) In fact, the sun has been specially mentioned in Avesta, as "the most beautiful body of God"! A Persian poet asks us to treat a flower as "a large volume, wherein we learn of God's creative skill and beauty." But we needed a symbol, which in small compass, could remind us of His glory (Light-heat-energy-vitality-virility-regenerative productivity etc.). So the Mazdayasni people founded Fire-temples, and called Fire as "*the son of God*", also as "the emblem of the most bountiful Creator".

We should avoid the error of considering hot glowing embers as the *only* aspect of Fire. Our scriptures point out several other aspects (invisible yet real): One that makes a seed and a cell to reproduce—Our vital essence—the energy within each atom—the fire of emotions—the fire of quick decisions and inspiration—the fire that burns all dross in our character through will-power . . . and the strangest of all: "*The Fire that is our inner instructor!*" The last named is truly the spiritual counterpart in man, hinting (as St. Paul did) that "we too are temples, within which is installed a sacred spark of Divinity!" Our Fire-temples give out light and heat from the altar; but within the shrine is the 'aura' (*Khureh*) of the Almighty, kept glowing through the presence of an invisible guardian-angel. Our homage is thus to this occult Presence, that is supposed "to bless the visitors, who offer their devotion". The fire-censer is thus a radiating centre of various influences, whose remote control is from God Himself. Five

times everyday, a throne is prepared for the "installation" of the Divine Presence.

The Archangel *Asha Vahishta* is in special charge of all luminous orbs and light. He thus spreads the aura of Purity all around, through the consecrated altar. Whoever offers fragrant wood or incense, does so with the implied idea, that symbolically he is laying his vices on the altar, to be reduced to ashes, an auto-suggestion of self-reformation. The atmosphere is purified through burnt incense and fragrant sandal-wood. But the devotion of the worshipper, his aspirations and self-sacrifice, are the most precious factors in the temple, to which God's response is equally uplifting for the devotee.

A Zoroastrian (while he sees that *throne* prepared on the fire altar) imagines God, as the supreme *Ruler*. This ritual is most impressive and dignifying, during which a bell is rung to "dispel all evil thoughts words and deeds from the centre throughout the surrounding locality." The idea of *Bandagi* (loyal service to the Master and the King) is there, when the devotee surrenders himself ("the very life of my body") entirely to the Holy Presence, within the innermost shrine! It is a place where the sick and the suffering can get consolation, and where our heart is poured out in gratitude to Providence; also where people seek inspiration through quiet contemplation. The shrine-sanctum may be compared to a storage-battery charged from an invisible Divine source; and we derive therefrom power and peace, which are needed in this world full of worries and misery. The temple is thus a centre of uplifting consolation. Attached to such a shrine are other halls, where sublime higher rituals (analogous to the Christian Eucharistic sacraments and Hindu *yagna*) are carried out in His name. There are often classes conducted for religious instruction also in such temples; and ordained priests are in attendance to keep the atmosphere quite appropriate to the main object of worship. God is transcendent as well as immanent; and those who are unable to attend the Temple-service, may (as already pointed out) offer devotion to God in other places: such as sea-side, mountain-tops or gardens.

(2) The last Will and Testament of Zarathushtra

Lord Zoroaster had completed his mission at the age of 77, when his message was spread through all parts of Iran and even beyond. One cannot forget that his task involved immense labour, which he undertook, as he felt compassion for the misguided people on earth, and wished to enlighten them with facts. He had temporarily relinquished the peace and tranquility of Paradise, to which he was permanently entitled as an "immortal angelic soul". His sublime message is thus a precious heritage to us all. He must have felt that the light he had kindled, should be kept aflame by his followers. He may have had some prevision of difficulties that lay ahead. So he had drafted a *Will*, wherein he gave expression to his last wishes. We are thus the executors and trustees of this testament, bound to carry out his express wishes. In this duty we are not expected to be involved in any monetary sacrifice. We thank God that for nearly 8000 years, this precious message has had its followers, who could bear testimony to its real worth. We who inherited this priceless treasure of wisdom, owe it to him, to pass it on to our heirs and successors intact. Earthly possessions can be forcibly taken away. But a sublime spiritual guide to the true way of life cannot be plundered from the heart of its devotees.

Zarathushtra had no material wealth to bequeath unto his relatives. His Will refers only to the preservation of and allegiance to his message. In *Hushbam* (and *Yasna*: 8) these are the words of his last testament:—"I, Zarathushtra, declare it as my earnest wish: that leaders of homes, colonies, towns and countries, may act in accordance with this religion, which was revealed to me by Ahura, seeking unanimity of thought speech and action, as befits my faithful followers". Each leader has his sphere of influence allotted to him. What is expected is a solid front against evil ways of life. We are to be true to the spiritual guidance laid down by him, not merely in outward behaviour, but even in our secret thoughts. This would be possible, if we studied the message thoroughly and with an open mind. It is possible to pick holes even in the most sensible philosophy, if we are keen on criticism and arguments only.

But where there is a will to practise what is preached, we may discover the truth of all sublime teachings by personal experience. The leader of the family may look after children—and the King after his subjects. When there is close collaboration of conscientious efforts of all leaders, it is bound to be successful. In Iranian administration even the King's jurisdiction was subject to the guidance of the High-Priest. We must note that Zarathushtra through this Will did *not* desire blind obedience. He made this point clear, when each one was enjoined "to use the light of reason and formulate one's own faith". The unanimity was not to be a patched-up truce. What was required, was an earnest effort to mould one's life in the pattern prescribed by him—in other words: "to discover the truth of the various maxims by their practical application to life." Such a discovery was bound to consolidate their ranks under the unseen leadership of Zarathushtra from on high. "The Will" aims at laying down a standard of behaviour to be shown by all followers, so that the inner faith (also called *Daena*) may remain strong. We who are heirs to this heritage, have to be cautious in distinguishing the real kernel of the teachings, from later social customs and even superstitions. We have also to guard against flimsy doubts, as well as false teachings from upstarts, who (as the Gatha puts it) "may harm your very life by their sinister influences". (Gatha 45).



SECTION VI

The goal of life:

In games like hockey and football, there is space between two posts known as "the goal", to which a ball has to be directed. On undertaking a journey, one has to decide where he wishes to go, and by what route? The long-distance traveller has to arrange many more things: his baggage, hotels, dates for appointed business and also monetary transactions. If one has to face hazards on hilly tracks or jungles, he has to engage a reliable guide to conduct him safe across special tracks. Isn't our life similar to a long journey? Banyan compared it to a *pilgrims' progress* towards a holy city. The fellow who approached a booking clerk, demanding a ticket to "anywhere", would be considered foolish. If one has not decided how to reach his destination, it is possible, he may, through oversight, take a train going South, while he was intending to go North! Accepting Zarathushtra as our guide, we are safe in following his leadership. The pilgrim has to reach Heavenly home (Garo-Demana = the holy paradise) whence he had come down into incarnation.

It is pointed out that the path of *Asha* is the only safest route, while other so-called "short-cuts" are dangerous. On this journey one encounters various dangers and seductive evil associates. We have very short time at our disposal, and we can't afford to flitter sway opportunities of progress. Who knows when Death may interrupt our journey? As a poet put it: a lily of a day is fairer far, than a huge oak tree that lives for three centuries, but which is destined to fall as a rough block of wood! So we have to live gracefully profitably and properly, according to our guide's instructions. Amassing a huge load of useless lumber would add to the difficulties of travel, through delay in having to take care of the same. So we are asked to travel light, giving away some of our "goods" to the needy. Mountain-climbers find even a bottle of milk a great encumbrance. We are however to preserve our "real wealth" that can be carried over (after bodily death) to our "home". These are our good thoughts words and deeds, which would be presentable to the Accountant-General

"over there". It has been clearly stated that "*Asha*" (our holy record) alone can enable us to meet God face to face, and to be one with Him in loving friendship. But *Asha* includes every moral virtue, and it is a long long way to attain perfection and deserve immortality.

But we are told of our goal: "Loving friendship and re-union with God" implying that at present our conduct is such as would displease our Father in Heaven! We have to make amends. One prescribed method is *Patet* (turning away from the path of transgressions and returning to the right track). This requires daily vigilance and constant review of our actions. During scorching heat, some portion of an ocean evaporates and forms clouds. These are wafted through the atmosphere in various directions by prevailing winds. Then one day the cloud gets condensed into dew-drops, which fall back into the ocean! Our sojourn is very much like this phenomenon. Wordsworth conceived that the soul of a child was often conscious of its separation from "our Father that is our home". All of us, in moments of peaceful contemplation, remember this home, and have a longing to return! It is for this reason that one, even in the midst of plenty and material prosperity, has this divine discontent! In Gatha (30-10) it is pointed out, that a time should come, when the influence of deceptive evil shall be broken; and then our soul would be re-united (*Yozente*) in the blessed abode of God! It means that even our temporary estrangement is due to the attractions of an illusory world, and we are "roaming about" in search of that lost balance!

For returning to that permanent abode of true happiness, four requisites have been prescribed: (a) *Mind* which is poised through peace and cheer; because it is a fact that the mind is drawn to sin, when it has a discordant feeling of wretchedness: "Virtue leads to happiness, but happiness too may lead to virtue". Mind has its own place and "can make a heaven of hell, or hell of heaven". This is our daily experience in working for the amelioration of the lot of the suffering humanity. The mental outlook has to be changed first of all. Real joy would dispel their clouds of despair, and would turn them away from criminal ways. So "we act as we think" and the mind can re-establish standards

of good conduct, if it is tired of sin. Through a real mental repugnance against evil, many criminals have had a total reformation. Thus we are enjoined to keep our mind tuned in sweet harmony and poise.

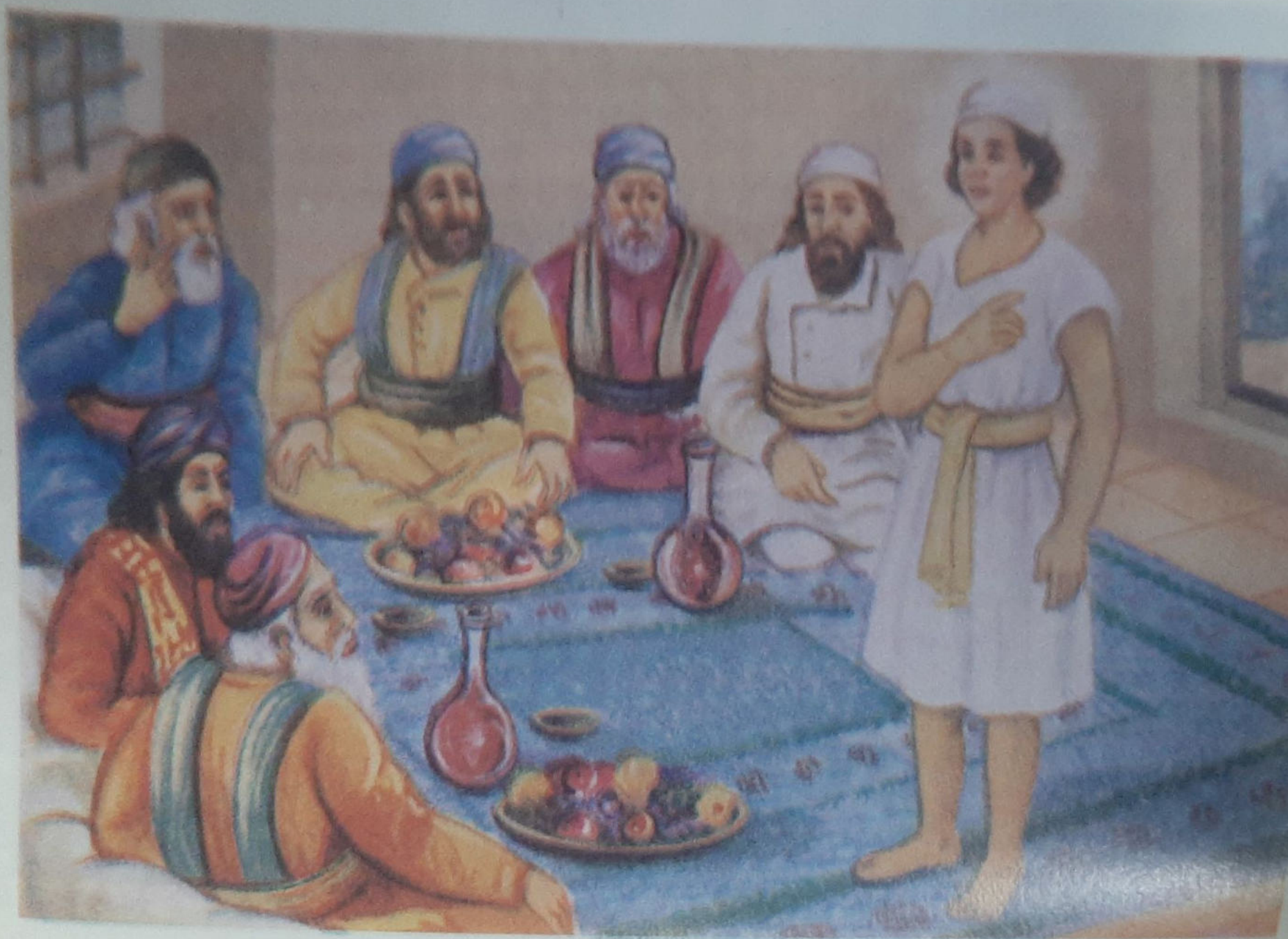
(2) The second requisite is benevolence of *the soul*. When one is burning with a sense of compassion and love, he is prompted to rush to the help of his unfortunate neighbours. God is the greatest of lovers, granting boons even to wanton sinners! Next to Him is the prophet, who, moved through real sympathy, temporarily leaves the peace of heaven, to enlighten misguided people on earth! We are human, because our essential quality is *humanity* which must rise above self-interest, and sacrifice everything to help others to be happy. "One has a right to bliss, only if he renders others happy". (*Gatha*) Real love is selfless and compassionate. When our soul is full of such a pure feeling, we can be nearer to the goal.

(3) Then "a healthy *body*" is put down as an essential factor for spiritual progress. Our religion does not countenance severe penance, or torture of the body, as it has to be taken care of as an essential vehicle of life. Without a healthy body even mental development is retarded. We have to study the laws of perfect health in order to prevent illness and disease. It means that we must pay careful attention to diet, sleep, exercise, cleanliness and hygiene. Sickness proclaims some breach of the laws of health. Our religion prescribes "moderation", and does not advocate either gluttony or long fasts. Treating the body as an enemy was once a heresy preached in Iran by Mani. At the same time, pampering the body with undue indulgence or indolence, would lead to illness. A healthy body should enable us to protect the weak, to perform meritorious acts, and to study the plan of God so as to promote its fulfilment. With proper care, and by forming good habits with patient control, the body would certainly enjoy a long life of usefulness.

(4) The last but not the least of the essentials for reaching the goal, is a sensitive *conscience*, whose voice of warning would act as a monitor, when we are about to fall into some error. If neglected, it ceases to perform its true function. "The Voice of



Wolves disabled in the presence of child Zarathushtra.



Zarathushtra confronting the debating gang of Durasarun

Silence may not speak twice"! We have to cultivate the habit of listening to this still small warning of intuition. It may serve as an alarm-clock to awaken us, and also to cause repentance and remorse when we are wanton. It may further encourage one to do better, when some good deed is done. With a clear conscience we can daily review our record of behaviour before going to bed, and where our default is indicated, we should form good resolutions not to repeat the same mistakes. In the Avesta text, there is the assurance given, that through these four measures "We can surely reach Our Father's presence."

There may be lapses and disappointments in cultivating these good habits; but with renewed efforts, we are sure to reach the goal. Our ancestors called this earthly life "a caravanserai meant for a stay of two to five days". Even then, keeping the final destination in mind, progress is sure to be made to reach the goal. The word 'Yoga' (Avesta: *Yozente* of Gatha 30) derivatively means reunion with the Divine source. Imperfect and unprepared as we are, we cannot presume now to be fit to appear in the presence of God. We must therefore purify ourselves thoroughly, with strict moral standards so as to be deemed worthy of that happy event.

The Sufi Prescription of the Path.

The Sufi philosophy, which had its origin in Iran, likewise laid down four gradual steps of spiritual development, "before one meets *The Beloved* face to face":—(1) At first, one must listen to the various precepts of saints and prophets, and try to "understand" their import with an open mind. Study, contemplation and resolution would be like gathering "steam power" for the inner spirit.

(2) The next point is to practise the virtues in daily life, and discover the best way of improving character. In *Hafta Yasht* we are enjoined to "teach others, after we have put into practice whatever truth we may have discovered". Action must follow the thoughts.

(3) Then we should investigate the laws underlying the technique, the why and wherefore of a system of philosophy. Even

when we get sound knowledge from books and teachers, it remains on the plane of borrowed hypothesis.

(4) Then, comes the last stage, when more inner light shines on various problems in order to *realise* at first-hand, the truth of acquired knowledge. With such a thorough absorption of true principles, doubts can never assail the seeker. The veil is lifted, and "the Beloved" is no longer distant. This is possible, when the "wine-bearer" (=Teacher) serves excellent "wine" (=True wisdom) in his "tavern" (=The school) and creates "intoxication" (=realisation during deep thought)—so that the *Beloved* (=God) appears unveiled, and the separation is now discarded as a past delusion.

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(2) Zoroastrian Freedom of thought in search of Truth:

When Zarathushtra began to preach his message, he did not advance any claim based on his infallibility or authority. Nor did he hint at any dire consequences, if his advice was rejected. In Gatha XXX he tells his audience "to listen carefully, to examine the statements with the light of reason, and to come to an independent decision; because *each one has a right to formulate his faith and beliefs*". In Gatha 45, he again exhorts all to have independent judgment, so that impostors may not ruin their lives by false directives. Here was a religion to be examined and accepted with free will and accord. His message is therefore called "*Naeda snaithishem* (=not imposed with the force of weapons). Yet many of us have our rational faculty obscured with prejudices or personal dislikes. We sometimes like to be spoon-fed by some, calling themselves "authorities"! Or we reject some thought off-hand, simply because it is new and appears strange. When our thoughts are allowed to be crystalised and stereotyped, there can be no progress in intelligent discrimination.

Even during the prophet's time, there were many who rejected his teachings, and preferred to continue in their erroneous ways. They were, of course, free to do so; but their obstinacy was not

based on mature judgment. They refused "to listen". This should be a warning to us. We should patiently consider the value of new ideas; or compare the conflicting views of various tenets, and then arrive at an impartial conclusion. It is said that no true religion can be against commonsense and Reason. We are prone to argue like advocates of any particular doctrine, forgetting that our duty is to be a judge, with cool balanced discriminative faculty, to sift truth from its encrustations. We are warned that "even from the mouth of babes is uttered some truth". We should be the losers if we think that we have no more to learn from others. One does not discover truth by arguments and discussions alone.

The next step, after listening, is to shed the light of reason on what has been put before us. This needs the power of discriminating the true from the false. Experts have to learn to detect false coins or faked gems, or adulterated products by special tests. Zarathushtra hints at false teachings (*Dush-Sastim*) which may mislead men to wreck their lives. Some men succeed because of a facile tongue, or very abstruse arguments, or "personal magnetism", when our free judgment is paralysed. First impressions are often faulty. Blind faith in any individual or a philosophy, may shut off our rational faculty. It is true that often intuitive understanding is superior to a rational speculative system. But the very word "man" is referring to "a being endowed with reason and clear perception." Personal likes and dislikes or emotional outbursts would certainly obstruct free thinking. Zarathushtra therefore does not arouse our feelings; but appeals to our clear and calm independent judgment alone.

When he refers to our special faith (*Varena-Vichithaya*) he is not submitting any of his teachings to be accepted as on good faith; but points out that each man is free to base his conduct on his own inner convictions, which are derived from calm deliberation; even if, later on, he may revise his opinions in the light of advanced study. *Varena* is a "chosen principle"—not blindly accepted, but the result of deep thought. Such a firm faith would be like a ship's anchor. Borrowed knowledge is not reliable when doubts arise. Only the deep convictions would resist attempts at deception. In Yasna XII, we deem it our duty to strive for two human freedoms: (*Vase Yaitim, Vase Khsheitim*)—freedom of

movement from one country to another, and freedom of teaching and thought. Beliefs thrust down one's throat, either by undue influence, or at the point of a sword, do not last long.

There have been cases of forced conversion in Iran. 'After a time, these "converted" people actually produced a new transformed system, whereby Zoroastrian tenets again predominated! Of course, one is not always competent to judge truth entirely and impartially. In that case reliable teachers have to be given credence; but the acceptance may be hypothetical until tested and proved sound later on. Zarathushtra's teachings have stood the test of time. The tenets of his message have been weighed and found true. The basis of our reliance on his injunctions, is the intrinsic value of the way of life, actually put into practice for ages. As long as we are not mature enough to appreciate fully the underlying truth of the various doctrines, we should not be assertive in an aggressive way. We may postpone final decision, until our faculties are fully developed. Summary *rejection* is worse than credulous *acceptance*, because the former too is not the result of enlightened judgment. "Wisdom is humble", and one learns more from day to day. It is a safe policy to postpone final judgment in matters, where we are unable to weigh the whole truth. There is a precept: "Live Truth, don't defend her; Thus shalt thou best honour her"! Similarly there are often several aspects of the truth of any philosophy. We are asked to keep an open mind. "None is so blind as he who refuses to see". There is a whole life-time before us to test our beliefs, and be prepared to change them. Ultimately truth prevails; and in spite of the opposition of a few prejudiced critics, Zoroastrianism was once accepted because of its intrinsic soundness, by a major part of the world.



SECTION VII

MISCELLANEOUS TERMS EXPLAINED

(1) *Our Calendar*: Our day begins with sunrise. Each month has 30 days, the first seven bearing the names of Archangels, and the rest named after subordinate angels. There are twelve months: seven named after Archangels, and five bearing the names of angels. At the end of the twelfth month, there are five days added, bearing the names of Zarathushtra's five *Gathas* (sets of hymns in metrical verse). Thus is every year uniformly made up of 365 days. In ancient Iran, there used to be an intercalary month (30 days) added by royal decree, after every 120 years, known as *Kabiseh*. The thirteenth month of that year was called *Vahijak* (auspicious). Each month has four sacred days for thanksgiving to God. (*Dae*): (1st, 8th, 15th and 23rd)—Sabbath days for rest and worship. There are three sects amongst the Parsis, with their respective separate Calendar: The majority (*Shahanshai*) has its new year in August. The Kadimis and Iranis: in July; and *Faslis* in march. There is evidence that the month of *Dae* (now 10th) was once the first. The present Parsi year is named after Yazdegard III, our last Parsi Emperor, whose coronation took place 1335 years ago, on day I, month I, of the *Shahanshai* year.

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(2) *Gahambar*: The year is divided into six sections, each called a *Gahambar*; the last five days of each of these sections, are set apart for festivals, worship and thanksgiving. Each represents an evolutionary stage of the creation of the Universe, of course, symbolically, as in the "6 days" of the Bible. Later these sections got some significance of the Iranian seasons of ancient times also:

(a) *Maidyozarema* (=Midspring) has the first 45 days ending with Day 15th of the Second month. During this period *the sky and the luminaries were created*. Perhaps *then* the earth was in a nebulous white-hot state.

(b) *Maidyoshahema* (=midsummer) has the next 60 days, ending with the 15th Day of the 4th month. *Water* was created during this evolutionary stage (cooling of the nebula to vapour and water).

(c) *Paitishahema* (sowing season?) has the next 75 days ending with the 30th Day of the 6th month. During this stage the *earth* was created (through further cooling and evaporation).

(d) *Ayathrema* (=Harvest) has the next 30 days ending with the 30th Day of the 7th month (nearing autumnal equinox)—during which period *Vegetation* sprouted out of the earth. This is the shortest stage.

(e) *Maidyarema* (=Midwinter) is the longest stage of 80 days, ending with the 20th Day of the 10th month, wherein the *animal Kingdom* came into existence.

(f) *Hamaspathmadema* (Equinoxial?) is the last stage of 75 days ending with the 5th Gatha of the 12th month. *Human Kingdom* was created during this period. Adding the days of all stages we have 365 days.

As already mentioned, the last five days of each *Gahambar*—stage are reserved for congregational worship, thanking God for the various creations and gifts of Nature. (*Ambar*: may refer to “a meeting together of people” from various places, to some central locality, where they had feasting and other social occasions also, including weddings).

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(3) Zoroastrian Theology

The Ameshaspentas (Archangels). Zoroastrian Theology is centred round “*The One without a second* (=apaoirim Mazdam)”. But for administrative convenience, God, so to say, divides Himself into seven supervisory units, called “Bountiful Immortal Beings”—Himself again remaining as the foremost Godhead as the Archangel.

(a) *Ahuramazda* the supreme Archangel retains the sphere of human beings under His protection, and allots the other six spheres to the remaining six Archangels.

(b) *Behman* (*Vohumano*) has the entire animal Kingdom under him, and is assisted as co-operators (*Hamkars*) by angels: *Mohor*, *Geosh* and *Ram*.

(c) *Asha-Vahishta* (*Ardi-behesht*) is administering all luminaries, the sky and stars above, and fire (light-heat) below. He is assisted by angels: *Adar*, *Sraosha* and *Behram*.

(d) *Shaharevar* (*Kshathra Vairya*) is in charge of the mineral Kingdom (metals, gems etc.) below the surface of the earth, assisted by *Khurshed*, *Meher*, *Asman* and *Aneran*.

(e) *Spendarmad* (*Spenta-Armaiti*) looks after the upper surface of the earth (agriculture, habitations) and is assisted by *Avan*, *Din*, *Ashiswangh* and *Marespand*.

(f) *Khurdad* (*Hwaretat*) supervises all parts of water, from the ocean to rivulets; and his assistants are *Tir*, *Fravardin* and *Govad*.

(g) *Amardad* (*Ameretat*)'s administrative sphere is the vegetable Kingdom. He is assisted by *Rashne-Ashtad* and *Zamayad*.

It should be carefully noted (as is made clear in the Avesta) that all creations belong to *Ahuramazda* alone, and the six archangels work in concord under *Ahuramazda* "who is their father". It is like departmental sections of the Divine Hierarchy of the world. The will and the plan of God (*Ahunavairya*) is The supreme standard Law underlying all administrations. Even in the Gathas, the word = *Ahuraongho* (=gods) suggests the concept of innumerable Divine sparks within every object. In the Gatha 29, there is a described conference, where *Ahura*, *Asha* and *Geush-tasha* (*Behman*) discuss the prevailing situation before the appointment of *Zarathushtra*! The number of *Farohars* (treated as *Fravardin*) has "incalculable divine sparks"; and with *Tir* are associated all the stars! So there are vast angelic hosts in this marvellous administrative set-up, bordering on "Pantheism or

all-embracing monotheism." We can say: "The One became the many, and the Universe is His outer form as well as His Kingdom". Adar and Sraosha are extolled in the Gathas!

In connection with the distribution of seven spheres of creation, we are warned, that our destructive habits would displease one or another of these Archangels. We are therefore to avoid wanton waste, and help the development of life and consciousness all around. The various sacred rituals of our religion have a dual purpose: (a) Offering of love to an angel and invoking his blessing, *always* taking the name of Ahuramazda, as the head of the department and (b) some sacrifice (charity, alms, poor-relief) is always inculcated to help the poor and the needy "in His Name". There is the benediction in our *Tan-durasti*: "May you co-operate with the will, plan and work of the Hierarchy"!

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(4) The law of Recompense, Retribution or Adjustment in Zoroastrianism

One of the names of God is Dadgar (the Just). He is supposed to redress all complaints. The law of *Asha* straightens out all creases. In our temporal government, laws may be changed. But Divine Will is firmly established underlying His administration, so that His laws are eternal. One such law is "As you sow, so shall you reap—or, Action and reaction are equal—or, You get what you deserve"—etc. There are very clear statements in the Gathas:—"God is never deceived"! "He is aware of each thought every time"! "He has fixed the basis of happiness and pain in such a way, that the evil-doer would always suffer the consequences! These laws will continue unchanged till the end of the world"! "Evil plight to the evil person, bliss to the righteous" . . . etc. Sometimes it takes a long time for a seed to fructify; at the same time, some reaction is also immediate (e.g. stomachache for indigestible food). Shakespeare puts the law in a significant maxim: "Macbeth in murdering Duncan, did murder his own sleep"! Every evil deed injures the perpetrator along with the victim. Sometimes a criminal "appears" to escape unscathed!

But "God's mill grinds slow, yet grinds it pretty fine". It may be an instance of delayed action.

"In God's arithmetic, there can be no error, howsoever small". The man who gets angry, spoils his own appetite and sleep. He may be considered as emotionally sick, and he may even spread the effect around like contagion. If a good man "seems" to go through suffering, it may be the result of a past action or a special test. None succeeds in growing wheat while sowing tares; even a seed accidentally mixed with some other lot, falling on the soil, would bear the fruit of that seed. If you strike the wall with a force of five pounds, the wall, in return, gives to your fist a rebound-blow of the same weight.

In our religion, thoughts and words too are treated as aspects of "action". Of course the motive behind an action has an important bearing in impartial judgment. When we injure somebody's feeling with malicious speech, it is the tongue that has been misused, and so *it* must undergo suffering in the future. In God's dispensation no weight is attached to any "undue influence" or "recommendations". Mercy is always incorporated in Divine justice, even though some "punishment" may appear harsh. All the laws of Nature are no respectors of persons, high or low. Laws of gravity or burning flames would apply to all—yet the reactions come into play, only when we break them. A parachute merely counters gravity by another law. We are not forced to incur the penalty if we respect the laws. So men are asked to study how to remain safe from the clutches of this law of Retribution, and thus remain free in their unfettered discretion. One who observes the laws of health, would not invite illness. This world is like a school, where men act as in the proverb: "He who has once burnt his tongue with very hot milk, would blow over even a cool drink of whey". The laws inculcated by religion are meant for our protection and benefit. "If you do not relish misery, then do not break the prescribed ruler of conduct".

We are, however, not subjected to severe penalties *immediately*, and here lies the action of *Grace*. There is postponement to give us respite. We have also not to suffer the consequences of another person's fault (unless we are accomplices, and deserve the

same). It is a very good practice for us constantly to review our acts (*Pasemani*), and when a fault is noticed, we should resolve never to repeat it (*Patet*). We often suffer the consequences of extravagance, even in connection with our physical and emotional energies. Those who are "highly strung", suffer later on, from nervous tension, and if they persist in this practice, even madness may be the consequence. Energy has therefore to be economised.

The accuracy of Divine Justice has been illustrated in *Ardai Viraf Nameh* (a book describing the life after death):—There was once a cruel man on earth, who had shown no mercy to anybody. But once, while passing by a hungry cow, tied in its stall, and straining its neck towards a sheaf of grass outside, he just kicked against that bundle, so that it reached the cow. On his departure to the other world, he had (according to the story) ulcers all over his body, except the lower limb, which was saved because of that one kind act! The same book and the *Hadokht Nask* narrate a remarkable story of our deeds on earth taking "a form" (pleasant or ugly according to our record.) That form (*Kerdar*) is confronting the soul and saying "I represent your deeds. If I am ugly, it is *you* who made me so. If I am handsome, the credit is *yours*."

The law picks out the particular organ or faculty that had been misused. If the mental powers have been dissipated, then the mind must suffer. Misuse of sight should affect the eyes. When wealth is squandered, poverty and want must be the consequence. An indolent fellow may remain unemployed and needy, because he had refused to toil for his daily bread.

We should remember that the so-called punishment too, is beneficial in purifying the soul by repentance and subsequent resolution to reform. Thus even pain is a good teacher. Besides wealth is not always an unalloyed blessing. Even the rich often suffer from bodily ills or worries of the mind. It is said: "God is nearer to those who patiently bear His mild yoke". Even saints and prophets had to go through ordeals. When people ill-treated them, they were tolerant and forgiving. Christ when crucified, prayed: "Father forgive them, as they know not what they do"! Sometimes there are tests and trials to find out the strength of one's inner faith in Divine Justice!

We are called *Ahura-ikaisho* = Having firm faith in God's judgment; and so, we cannot express doubts regarding His justice. Even during physical exercises, the muscles and nerves are full of pain at the early stage. But as time passes, the body gets strong through the power of endurance. Zarathushtra's significant words (in Gatha 28) are notable: "The Omniscient Lord is wise, so let that be my lot, which He ordains"! There is that Indian legend of King Harishchandra, whom God tested in many ways (loss of his throne, death of his only son, wife sold as a slave etc.) and the final proposal was: "You must bear false witness in such and such a case. We then restore to you your throne, wealth and relatives". But he remained firm, scorning the temptations, saying: "Wealth, throne and even dear ones are to be left behind. Truth alone shall endure, so I cannot comply with your offer"!

There is of course the consolation that the real reward of our deeds would surely be available in the next world, if not here and now. When we face tribulations, we must confess that we have deserved the same by our faults in the past. The angels, entrusted with the task of "recording the account" of our thoughts words and deeds (*Bago-Bakhtar*) are responsible for "distribution of just rewards" according to our deserts. They cannot go wrong in their assessments, as they are exceedingly wise and just. As our wisdom grows, we must expect to reduce to the minimum, our errors and transgressions. Our collective record of merits achieved here, has been allegorically compared to "Food to be digested in the next world". It must taste very pleasant for those who are righteous!



SECTION VIII

ZOROASTRIAN ETHICS

Our duties and obligations in this world

A human being is superior to animals, because he has the sense to understand the heavy debt he owes to God. Tennyson has pointed out this distinction: "In what are men better than beasts, if they did not pray to God"? We, who belong to "this good religion," are entrusted with certain duties to be discharged in this world, every day. One can never repay the immense debt we owe to the *Creator*. Milton suggested that "man, by owing, owes not"—in other words: our acknowledgement and thanks, would in some measure, make the burden on our heart somewhat light! There is another way: In the service of all around us (men and beasts), we indirectly shift on our shoulders, a little of the heavy task, with which God has to provide the daily needs of all. "He that hath done the least unto my fellowmen, hath done that unto me"! It is a great privilege to act as God's servants, in spreading joy and cheer around us through charity.

While sending us down to earth, our Heavenly Father has charged us to be helpful in spreading that light of wisdom, which we derive from our religion. The world has great need of purity, true happiness, peace and compassion. Therefore, we can work in many spheres of life:—(1) The first duty is to our Creator (2) The next to our environments (the beautiful Nature, including vegetation and animals) also to our parents, our community and our Panchayet or "Anjuman" and our motherland. We cannot, at the same time, omit to remember our dear departed relatives and friends. (3) The third duty is to our own inner self, that can evolve in virtues and strong character, so as to be fit for the final "atonement and re-union." A Persian proverb points out that "Life is exclusively meant for service (*Bandagi*). If one lived without rendering this service, he should be ashamed of his useless life". In a religious text, it is stated that "One who did not offer due homage, where it was necessary, should be called a thief of duty".

Even dumb animals feel grateful to their kind masters, and often sacrifice their own life in defending them. Perhaps the melodious warblings of birds may be an expression of grateful prayer in their own way! A poet has pointed out, that even the numerous stars are serving God by shedding light through the darkness of the night.

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(I) Our duties to God

There are several reasons why we should feel thankful to God as a solemn duty:

(1) He provides all our necessities (food, water, health and mental insight). Whenever men went astray, He sent down great Teachers and Prophets to guide us aright. Without this spiritual light, we would have continued to grope in the dark, and lose our bearings.

(2) In our loving remembrance of His protection, we derive spiritual strength. In contemplating His marvellous skill in creation, we are uplifted by getting consolation even in our difficulties.

(3) We feel that in undertaking some selfless service, we get the satisfaction of proving useful to Him in some obligatory filial duty. Of all our so-called friends and relatives, He alone is the *Permanent Benefactor*. After all, what can we offer to Him which is not His? There is nothing we can call "our own," except our virtues, and our record of deeds good or bad. Perhaps we may offer at the sacred altar, our determination to burn the dross in our habits; and also offer the fragrance of good thoughts and deeds purified by unselfish love.

We may lay down *some rules of conduct* in this connection:

(a) Form a habit to set apart daily, some time to offer our heartfelt prayers, and always to recite His "grace" before partaking of dinner. (b) To remember Him in every new effort (business or avocation) invoking His help and presence, with humility; and

doing our duty faithfully, mindful of His watchful eyes. (c) See Him in all objects of Nature (The sun, the ocean, mountains forests etc) and offer homage to His real Presence behind all these forms. (d) To carry out such routine "drill", which is enjoined by our Prophet for a disciplined life: such as the "Kushti ritual", and daily recital of those potent maxims and spells (*manthra*), which are meant to sustain us against difficulties. (e) To hold all gifts and property as sacred Trust in His name, avoiding waste and never feeling elated with pomp and dignity! To surrender ourselves fully to His Will in all affairs. (f) Our ancestors always put His name at the top of all letters and documents, in order that they may never forget His presence and supervision, and never be tempted to be untruthful. Even in doing acts of generosity, remember that it is He, who enable us to give away something to the needy. Dedicate all acquisitions to the Lord, as He may then inspire us to utilise them for the benefit of the world. (g) When appreciation and congratulations are showered on you, receive them humbly as an agent or channel, and pass them on to Him. In the Gathas, such a person is called God's "friend" (*Hakha*) entitled to inspiration.

(II) Duties to Our Environments

If we are convinced, that the Universe around us is a living evolving vehicle of God, we may try to see His beauty and artistic skill in every flower, in every star, and in every living being (even a worm)! Vast forests grow without the special care of a gardener! Many creatures live there, and go through their "struggle of life" unaided by man. The sun has been termed "the most beautiful body of God". Its rays promote vitality in vegetable as well as animal Kingdom. It is not improper to believe, that some guardian angel or Nature-Spirit is appointed to help trees to grow and bear fruits. Sir Jugdish Bose scientifically demonstrated the fact that a plant is sensient to various impulses and influences. We have to approach a plant with some prayer (beginning the *Yasna* ceremony) before we pluck a twig, as if asking permission of its guardian! There are many such invisible Spirits near seas or caves. Clairvoyant people can see their play.

Nature is thus a vast workshop: "When all Thy mercies, O my God, my rising soul surveys — transported with delight, I am lost in

wonder, love and praise"! Perhaps even in our daily salutation and greetings to a fellowman, we recognise the Divine spark within him. When God creates a seed, the entire details of the future tree (shape, colour, scent, flavour) are sealed therein, which none can alter. The smallest microbe has its delicate constitution fixed in a cell according to a design of the Supreme Intelligence. The bees form numerous hexagons without a flaw, in their hive; and the latter is an object-lesson in smooth government, as well as in social collaboration! The spider's web and the termite's tunnels are products of instincts, that God has given to tiny creatures. The heavenly bodies have their orbits and speed fixed, so that there are no collisions.

Observing all these works of wonder our duties would be:—

(a) We should have due humility, shedding our pride, in the evident thought, that man can't create even a natural feather or a flower, as per the original pattern. Our great reverence for the Creator is augmented by observing His Universe.

(b) To try and help Nature to grow and multiply as per God's plan. Wanton destruction pertains to Satan's field of resistance. Every living creature, however tiny in size, has its life's destiny chalked out for its evolution. Do not engender false pride: that we men are their masters! Even if we have superior wisdom, we should have to act as their protectors and not enemies. We should live and let live.

(c) It is our duty to promote cleanliness all around, so that the health of all beings may be preserved. This too falls under the sphere of *Asha*; and we should be careful lest we contaminate springs, air, or fields with filthy poison. This is our duty not only to the elements, but also to our fellowmen, who expect our co-operation in clean living.

(d) We should protect and preserve those innocent birds and beasts, who have equal right to live and prosper, and to progress forward. Most of these creatures have trust in man who should help them evolve along their own ways.

(e) It is our duty to foster goodwill and harmony among men; and never to give way to hatred or irrational prejudices. All are

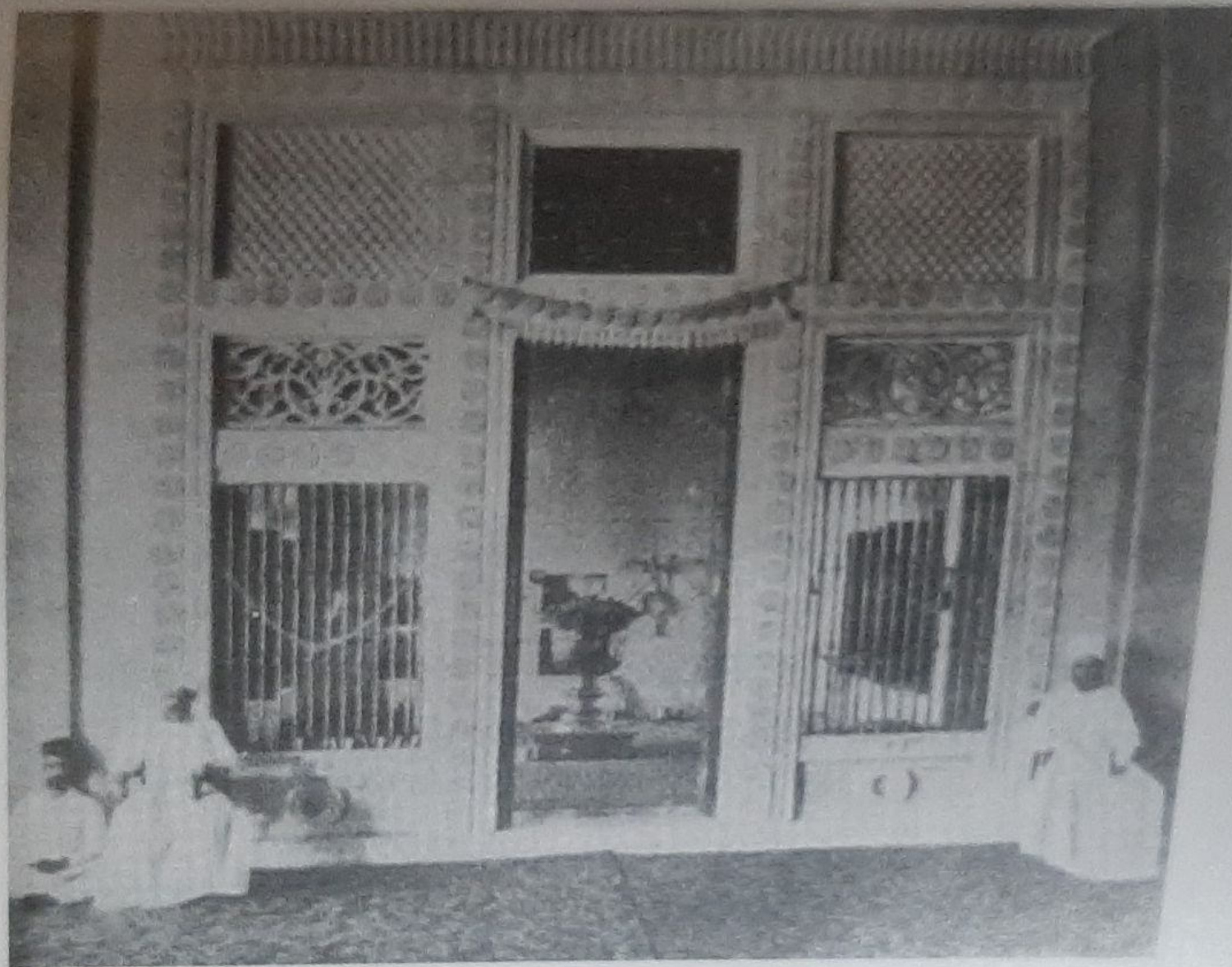
to live, as brethren, as ordained by God. The caste, sex, colour and creed need not be obstacles in our fraternal relationship. They are only outer forms, while the divine spark within the apparent body, is the real man. Humanity (compassion) must distinguish us from ravenous beasts. "Nature red in tooth and claw" may be a prevailing rule of life in the jungle! "Hatred ceaseth with love". We can banish wars by rooting out hatred from each individual heart. The art of living together can be learnt from ants and bees. We who boast of superior wisdom, need not descend to the level of wolves and tigers.

(f) Real charity is an aspect of love and sympathy. It can be fostered by unselfish service. There are several ways of charitable help. Sharing our wealth, our knowledge and our art, would be one of them. But nursing a sick man to recover health, or uplift of a "fallen" sister to a position of respect, or consoling a grief-stricken person, when he feels dejected and forlorn . . . these too are excellent ways of charity. Even in the prevention of poverty and disease, we should be moved by love and fellow-feeling.

(g) Man's real merit lies in his honest dealings through all pure (*Asho*) means with upright conduct. Therefore we should continue to build up our character, as a mason builds a wall, frequently employing his square and plumb-line to ascertain safety. It is said, that a child is nearer to God, because of its guileless innocent nature, never dreaming of harming others.

(h) We are bound to enhance the reputation of our motherland; and the country's welfare depends on each individual inhabitant. We have to defend the country against dangers, even at the expense of our very life, because thereby we make the country safe for others.

(i) We live in the midst of Invisible Beings, even the spirits of our dear departed relatives and friends, who would feel highly pleased to see our life of purity and amity. They would bless us for our loving remembrance of them, and for such charity as is offered in their name.



The Fire altar in the sanction of our Temple.



Navzote (Investiture) Ceremony in Progress.

(III) Our duties to ourselves

St. Paul has confessed that "There are two selves within me, warring against each other"! He refers to the true Self having to resist the demands of lower personality, or what he calls "spirit against flesh". The same conflict is hinted at by Zarathushtra, as between *Spena* and *Angra*, the twin forces in the Universe, as well as their influence on men. It is necessary to know how to live, so that we are on the side of purity and progress. The following rules would be helpful to lead a moral life with a sense of responsibility and self-respect:

(1) It is true to say that people judge us from our behaviour. Rules of etiquette are laid down for cultured refined souls, formerly known as "gentlemen"! If others may be well-impressed, not only as to our own upbringing, but also our religion, that would inspire goodness in them. People never stop to ask, if you hold a University degree or a government title. They observe our speech and actions, on the analogy of the maxim: "Handsome is that handsome does". So Behaviour bespeaks a man.

(2) Purity has to be observed in several spheres: bodily cleanliness, pure food and drink, hygienic habitation etc. But the most essential sphere is the *heart*, the centre of good feeling. One's *Asho* life would be reflected in his sympathy and compassion. That again would spread cheer and sweet concord all around. Moral conduct has much to do with emotional culture; because where there is peace and poise, a life of moral rectitude is easy. Anger, envy, lust etc. poison our feelings; and because we feel irritated, proper moral behaviour becomes difficult.

(3) Our thoughts also are affected by the state of our feelings. "Head and Heart must go together". Sheer intellectual calibre, devoid of softer feelings, would lead to egotism pride and cruel competition. Unreasonable prejudices, harsh criticism and arrogant selfishness are like diseases of the mind. It is said "Wisdom is humble, and is adorned by charity." "True learning is that, which liberates a soul from thralldom of vices". It is tragic to see a "learned man" a slave to addictions: drink smoke and slang! True education should dispel all superstitions.

(4) Then it is essential to provide our soul with opportunities of growth through devotion and study of one's religious principles. Unfortunately we pay very little attention to religious-instruction. The result is, that the youths cannot be blamed, if they are misled through ignorance. They do not know how to transmute their grosser emotions into refined ones.

(5) We should remember that amassing wealth is not our supreme task. It happens that the most cultured is often the poorest, because he uses his wealth in making others happy. The devotional force of the heart, must have an outlet through worship, visit to temples, or hymns and songs to the glory of God. This establishes a good balance between intellect and emotions. We call our Temple "the house of God", because its atmosphere is permeated with devotion, peace and love, and it may tend to pacify our turbulent passions.

(6) Even the domestic household duties give us an opportunity of benevolence; because we have to take care of our dependants and servants; and because we learn in a joint-family, the art of living a "community-life" of tolerance. In bringing up children on the right lines, we render service to our country. *Atash niayesh* puts it down as an essential requisite that our sons should serve the country for its progress. Family-life ensures stricter moral conduct, and one's "potential for doing good" is multiplied (marriage Rite mentions this) when the family is a close-knit compact unit for beneficence. It is said that a man, in helping the family, undergoes more hardships than an ascetic recluse, who retires to a jungle for penance; because there are several opportunities of self-denial at home itself in caring for others. All these may appear commonplace, but they tend to uplift our soul.

All these duties are to be performed ardently and cheerfully, without feeling a sense of outer compulsion or boredom. There must be the inner satisfaction of having discharged a part of our indebtedness to God and man, and thereby helping the growth of our Soul too.



SECTION IX

THE PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS RITES AND CEREMONIES

Men differ from one another in temperamental leanings, tastes and tendencies. Some are so constituted that they seek God through *the head* = intellectual search (Science, philosophy etc). Their laboratories and observatories serve them as "Temples", to discover the beauty and grandeur of God. Another type is seeking God within, through devotion of *the heart*. They are never tired of singing His praise, and surrendering to His will, ungrudgingly. Choir-music, with rousing hymns suit them. But there is a third type that is partly dramatic, that needs suitable activities, discipline, rituals and routine functions to lead the "server" to his *Master through the hand!* Work is worship for such people, and ceremonies are a form of service, to their mind. All great prophets have provided (for all the three types), some unique method of approaching God. Religious rites are specially suited to the third type; but it must be remembered, that there are people, who need a mixture of all the three routines to avoid lop-sided development.

(1) In many rituals, the symbols used are like scientist's apparatuses, to explain some mystic truth. There may be "a silent drama" proceeding through signs, gestures and movements, in imitation of what God is doing on the highest plane. The congregation has to learn the symbolic interpretation and its significance; otherwise the sublime living ritual becomes a rigid shell. Take for example, the "symbolic representation of the source of life, and its ultimate goal", by drawing water from a well, reciting some noble truths from the scriptures, and finally returning a part of the consecrated water (sacrament) to the well! We learn there-from: that we have to return and merge with "the source of existence" (*Ahura*) after due purification! Just as in a laboratory-class, an orange stands for the earth, and a lamp for the sun, to illustrate the rotation and revolution of our globe, in the same way many objects (bread-wine-milk etc). are there in ceremonies, as emblems of spiritual counterparts or some moral lessons.

(2) The term Ceremony is derived from Greek: *Keremon* = *Karma* = An action! We have to be alert and vigilant in our various activities on the dinner-table, or at a public gathering, or at court or at church. The prescribed rules of etiquette have to be observed to show good breeding. "What to speak? — when and how?" — would need correct training in order not to appear rude. Often our strict adherence to "good manners in society" would enable others to judge our gentility, and self-control. One has to be calm and collected, precise and considerate, in our dealings with others. *Actually these too are ceremonies; because thereby we cultivate some deliberate good habits!*

Religious ceremonies too require concentration, poise, good timing, as well as correct pronunciation and intonation. Some of them need great control and endurance during long rituals lasting for about eight hours! Just as gestures are significant on the stage in *acting*, in the same way the various manipulations by the priest on his work-table, convey certain ideas and object-lessons. The Celebrant at a holy ritual, has to be prompt and meticulous, in carrying out the prescribed routines. This is (on the analogy of other social occasions) an element of importance.

(3) *Unless we are hypocrites*, open to the charge of not-believing in what we say, it should be confessed that our rituals *have* their occult side, wherein Invisible Beings and the departed spirits are called to participate. Actually certain rituals act as a link with the other world, invoking the help of angels in our undertakings. *This is the spirit of our religion.* The *Yasna* invites 33 angels to the site of the ritual, and particularly those, that are to bring down "*Nirang*" = some occult "force" into the sacramental items! On all auspicious occasions, we pray for the blessings of these angels (*Fireshtas*). We request *Sraosha* and others to help and guide the souls of our dear departed relations "over there", in that strange world. Our homage and salutations are daily offered to the invisible helpers.

(4) The concept of our sacrament (as in other religions) is: that we prepare suitable *vehicles* of force; and when these (the sacred bread = *Draona*, and the *Haoma* extract) are held forth for the angels to pour down their spiritual influences, these become

"vibrating, radiating, magnetised" objects, to be shared by the congregation with due humility, so that, for a time, we have "the communion" of souls. Our texts describe the ways of contacting these angelic hosts, and set down the nature of their blessings as their response.

The priests (when ordained) are mere agents in these rituals. The shrine-room acts as a "power-house to charge a battery". The sacraments are called *Ashaya-Uzdatam* = "exalted through holy power!" These Beings are supposed to be guardians of all temples, even farms, and other objects of Nature. We offer thanks to them for their gifts [rain, light, vital aura (*khureh*), food and drink]. A major part of the "*Khurdeh-Avesta*" consists of our homage, and *their* response in co-operation. (Modern science is now probing into the world of the departed souls; and Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, F. Myers etc. have secured messages from that occult world). Many of the *miracles* owe their success to such supernatural help. Our prayers offered, (facing the sun or the ocean of fire) are literally mentioning the guardian angel (*Yazata*) who receives our homage! They are sentient Beings helping Nature under God's orders.

(5) Some rituals are intended to awaken men's sub-conscious "mental centres" during important occasions like a King's coronation, or a wedding ceremony, or the initiation rite, or a priest's ordination. At the outset, we *always* invoke the presence of God and His hosts, and conduct the ceremony, as if they are present in spirit as witnesses. In such cases the ritual affects our attitude to life in a mysterious way, but many can "sense" the change, while the holy rite is in progress. Of course, we can obstinately shut our minds and hearts against these influences, through doubt and disbelief, but then the loss would be ours.

(6) We have to remember that some ceremonies are for the benefit of *the living*. There is divine consolation available, when one is aggrieved. There is the psychological effect of our offering help, and feeling some service having been rendered to the departed souls. Peace and patience are felt when impressive rituals are carried out. The sick and the needy derive courage from these invocations. People who have to start on a long hazardous journey;

and those who are venturing into new business, feel that through the rites, they have done their duty to deserve blessings from on high, specially as most of these inculcate alms and gifts to the needy also! Even in that brief "Kushti" ritual, one is mentally reassured of being fit to fight against difficulties.

(7) The "Mantric" effect of chanting some potent spells (perhaps originally composed by Zarathushtra) must deserve their own response, at least on the mind of those who utter them. Some of them are meant to call the attention of invisible helpers.

(8) It is clearly mentioned that our departed relatives *do ardently wish* to be lovingly remembered, with some tokens of the love to be in the form of food clothes etc. to be given away as charity to the needy. Those who recite these prescribed prayers, do feel greatly relieved of sorrow. The days, on which anniversaries of the departed fall, are often remarkable for substantial charities, even dedicating large homes for the poor in memory of a particular relative. Even dumb animals are not forgotten: Water-troughs, cattle-shelters and hospitals have been constructed for the animals as memorials to that relative.

All these offerings are of course acceptable to God, as tokens of man's love and devotion. At the same time, the donor feels gratified to feel, in a vicarious way, the satisfaction of those to whom relief is offered. He feels happy by rendering others happy, as this is the Zoroastrian unique way.

Inspite of all these benefits from religious ceremonies, there are *two great perils* attendant on them:

(1) If the rites are performed as an imposition, or forced drudgery showing lack of enthusiasm, the effect thereof is nullified. Moreover, when the purpose or rationale of the ceremony is not understood, the effort is mechanical and lifeless. Only those who are quite temperamentally drawn to this form of worship, would derive full advantage from it. For example, if the splendour of the sun does not draw the admiration of a devotee, his "*Khurshed-Nyaesh*" may not be effective! Those who have a poetic perception of Nature (Gardens, warbling birds, bubbling springs, vast

expanse of water etc.) would feel enthusiastic at the sight of God's beauty and grandeur underlying these forms. A superb violin-music was once termed by a sceptic, as mere "friction of horse-hair on cat-gut". In the same way some rituals do *not* appeal to some temperaments which are highly metaphysical.

(2) Another danger lies in our unworthy bargaining habit, whereby ceremonies are performed expecting some material reward! Real *Bandagi* should not aim at any personal advantage. It should be as a duty for duty's sake. God is performing *His* daily *Yasna*, showering millions of gifts on all, without the least hope of any praise or oblation in return. It is *His* way of Sacrifice; and man in his *yasna* ritual, is trying to imitate this, in a very small way! We enjoy the blessings of wealth, health, and wisdom; and so are bound to feel grateful to Providence. In Avesta, we pledge "the very life of our body" to God, because it is verily *His* gift granted us as a trust. But those who expect reward of their "offerings or charity" through a sacred ceremony, are misled into wrong beliefs.

There are again those, who spend a good deal lavishly on these rituals, even beyond their means. This is quite undesirable. Over and above tangible offerings, there are other more precious things — our thoughts, goodwill, blessings, sweet words, sympathy and guidance — that cost nothing in money. These are more acceptable to God. Finally there is the concept of a God's Bank, (*Ganj-e-Dadar*) to which all unselfish heart-felt sincere offerings are credited; and from this collection the angels daily distribute boons to the needy. This idea is splendid in reminding us, that the rituals are meant for the good of the world as a whole. The individual's effort is merged in one universal contribution.

Another *important point* should be remembered: None of our rituals is performed with the hope, that the law of justice may be altered, through the prayers of dear ones, for mitigating the effects of one's evil deeds. The obsequies do *not* pray for forgiveness or for cancellation of one's past record of conduct. The real effect, however is in offering goodwill, consolation, encouragement and love to others, for whose benefit a special prayer or ritual is offered.

SECTION X

Virtues necessary for a successful life: (Some Texts quoted.)

When we talk of *success*, we should be definite as to what is meant thereby. We often find "successful millionaires", who are notorious for their crooked ways and ill-gotten wealth. A fat bank-balance, some cars, some mansions, a large retinue of servants.... would these indicate "success" in life? Treating the world as a "battlefield", a successful Zoroastrian should have attained victory over his lower passions. The popular notion of a man with large income, and great influence, through his holding a post of authority, may be wrong, judged from higher moral standards: "What shall it avail a man if he gained everything and lost his soul?" Dr. Faustus had mortgaged his soul to Satan, and was later told by the latter, that Faustus could not even show sympathy for a sinner! It happens that man "cannot serve God and Mammon both, at the same time". Still the outer pomp has attractions, which should be countered by the guidance of our religion. Gambling, deceit and looting can often succeed in making one "Great and successful". But the inner heart of such people knows the facts! They lose self-respect, judging by their own conscience. The poorest man derives from his crust of stale bread, more sweetness and satisfaction, than the "crooked-rich" can feel with a course of a dozen dishes.

Success lies in ensuring the bliss of the soul. We need to lay by treasure for the next life, as Emperor Akbar has pointed out on his epitaph. Men may be deceived by appearances, but God would judge from our self-control in resisting temptations. Our real "prestige" is not material! When Zarathushtra rejected Satan's offer of a kingdom, he was expressing his low estimation of wordly possessions, as contrasted with eternal happiness of the soul! Therefore "success" in its higher sense must take into consideration the conquest by our divine essence over mere earthly attractions.

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(I) Let us examine our short "*Ashem-Vohu*" text: It lays down three important criteria of happiness:

(a) "*that our Ashoi (Pure honesty) is the greatest boon*". It is superior to money; because it can be taken over to the other world as our precious acquisition. *Asha* is the only true path leading to the heavenly home. He alone is lucky who can show a record of pure thoughts, feelings, words and deeds. Therefore if you are asked to pray for only one boon, you may demand *Ashoi* as the most valuable one.

(b) "*that Ashoi alone leads to perfect bliss*". Other means of enjoyment are transient. Even health and wealth and cleverness can give a brief period of happiness *here*; But the happiness enjoyed by the soul through truth, faith, charity and purity, would last beyond bodily death. Real success lies in our inner satisfaction through integrity and compassion.

(c) But there are people, who may present an outward show of holiness, to secure applause or dignity. Numerous *Sadhus* are daily given respect, whose pretensions are false. Therefore it is herein pointed out, that "*he alone would attain bliss, who is practising Ashoi for its own sake!*" "Conscience makes cowards of us all", and if we know inwardly, that our guise is misleading, we cannot enjoy the reward of purity. A saintly person may not be rich, and may not be admired by friends; but in God's estimation, he is a successful man fit for paradise.

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(II) Let us study another short but important ancient text: *Ahuna Vairya* (also called *The Word*). It too lays down three eternal maxims:

(a) "*that our spiritual guide (Ratu) through his utter purity, has vast authority in his own sphere of religion and wisdom.*" He has been designated an angel. He is a great officer in the kingdom of heaven, whose influence over the world, in matters spiritual, is limitless. He cannot (and should not) be compared to ordinary professors and pandits or sadhus, who are of course very imperfect in wisdom and compassion. His strength lies in his "*loving mind fit for divine inspiration.*" He is treated by God

as His friend. He can therefore guide and inspire us to attain to the Kingdom of heaven.

(b) "*He who serves the world for God's sake, would deserve the gift of benevolence*"—is the second maxim. The reward for all real "servants of God", is not any earthly pomp, but it is the gift of *Behman* (Loving wisdom). Such people are busy in spreading happiness and light amongst the needy. The service of humanity is equivalent to the service under God. Such people would develop their mind through selfless dedicated service; and would be fit for inspiration and spiritual progress. *Behman* would enable such people to spread their good influence among ignorant men, who would benefit with the light of religion.

(3) The third maxim lays down another precious reward: "*He who shelters the wretched and miserable people, would deserve great authority in the Kingdom of God*". Here is a prize declared for the compassionate patrons of the poor (called "blessed" in the Bible). It is not any earthly title or pomp, but it is an appointment as an executive officer or minister in God's realm, where those who are down-trodden here, are raised by God's grace, in the next life. "God is the Omnipotent King of the universe", and those who wield power here to do good in His name, and exercise His authority, are greater than petty officers of a temporal state. Those, who need protection from tyrants and plunderers, have the first right to be relieved by saints. Strong *will* is the distinguishing faculty of those who protect the weak; and God's agents are gifted with this in ample proportion.

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(III) The short but very significant formula, known as *Yanghe Hatam* (like the two quoted above) is a Pre-Zoroastrian sacred text. Its substance:- "*Those of the living, who are benevolent through their self-sacrifice, are known to God due to their piety. We remember with love all such men and women of the world*". Here we are assured that our deeds are taken note of by the Omniscient Lord; and we need not therefore take the trouble of proclaiming these to the world, or mentioning them in our prayers.

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(IV) The text of *Kerfe-Mozda* is equally significant:—

(a) Man is liable to err, but "as soon as he is aware of his transgression, he should hasten to make amends by some righteous act" so as to neutralise to some extent, the evil effect of the past sin. It is no use merely lamenting or showing regrets. If he has created a blot, he should apply himself to erase the same with some counter-measure. If he finds he has gone astray, let him "turn-about" in the opposite direction, so as to return to the right path. If the heart has been hardened through cruel conduct, let him show mercy all around. If he has misappropriated some one's fortune, he should repay it with interest and apology. Those who continue now to linger on the path of sin, may find it harder still to reform later on. Real repentance should prompt one to correct his errors. It is never too late to mend, and there are recorded instances of total reform (conversion) in the cases of hardened sinners. Even if we have only a short time at our disposal, while expecting death, there is ample opportunity to improve with firm resolutions. *Patet* implies a total change of direction from sin to righteous reform; and this is possible, if we keep our conscience quite alert and sensitive in tune, so that it can give us due warning every time when a law is broken.

(b) Then it states: "*In order to gratify my soul, may I participate in deeds of righteous intent*". When we are deeply absorbed in sensual pleasures, our soul feels very sorry. We should therefore think of adding to the soul's satisfaction, by following the path of *Asha*. Of the 24 hours of a day, some considerable portion must be reserved for "feeding the spirit", just as we are involved in securing our daily bread "with the sweat of the brow". There is a pathetic appeal of our soul expressed in the *Atash Niyaesh* in allegorical terms: "The Fire on the altar (= our soul) looks at the hands of a visitor, and asks: '*What has the walking friend (= the body) brought for the sitting one (the soul?)*'" Here's a call for some "fragrant incense" for the inner flame! When we feel the inner discontent, we should get busy to carry out some righteous acts. Even a King on his throne, in the midst of plenty and luxury, is often feeling a void deep within his heart. Man cannot "live by bread alone".

(c) True saints, after their labour of love, expect no reward. Their prayer quoted here is: *"May all our good deeds spread their effect all over the globe — as vast as an ocean — and may they have a firm root"*! Here is a model for selfless service by those, who do not bargain even for paradise! Their merit is credited to that "God's Bank", already mentioned, a reservoir meant for the universal good. The world is the better for the altruistic service of such lofty souls. It is such people who shall "inherit the world". For analogy we may take the case of the owner of a vast garden, who grows flowers with the only motive of his neighbours' pleasure. He, of course, enjoys the inner satisfaction of spreading happiness around him; and from the standpoint of Divine justice, he secures in future greater opportunities of acting as an agent of God!

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Divine Dispensation

(V) *A potent factor in achieving success is our absolute faith in God's dispensation*, so that we may go about cheerfully in the knowledge, that nothing goes amiss: "Not a sparrow dies but He knows". When we entertain doubts about Divine administration, we may be induced to be irresponsible in our conduct, thinking that there would be no reactions in a world managed in some haphazard way! But those who do not believe in God's existence, or in the "Doomsday", should have no vent or outlet to pour out their grievances, or seek redress through prayers. Whom should they appeal to, if they believe in accidental happenings and absence of any design of an Intelligent Administrator? Where should they search for the origin of all creations? Whose will ordains great upheavals like quakes, floods or epidemics? When we propose, who overrules our wishes and plans? What's the good of moral conduct, if there is no reward forthcoming? These are some of the questions confronting an atheist. But whoever has been convinced of the laws, that tend to preserve balance, can see the Creator in each atom, in each living cell, and in each movement of the stars. Such people derive great consolation and courage, when things go wrong, *with the firm conviction that His plan is never faulty*. God the

Recorder would take note of all that we think speak and do; and whatever He ordains must be for the universal good.

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Harmony and Concord

(VI) Another good qualification to achieve success, is *the art of living together in harmony*. We may differ from others, and yet it is possible that *the other fellow may be right from his standpoint!* Unnecessary controversy embitters both sides. A quarrelsome man loses the sympathy of his friends. In trade and commerce, "united we stand, divided we fall". In matters of religious beliefs, there is the possibility, that *we know nothing for certain*. We have no first-hand knowledge of the unseen world. We may have misinterpreted religious injunctions. So it is better to live in concord, even if our beliefs are not common. Barriers of caste, colour, sex and creed would not be insuperable, if we respect the views of other people. If we combine to appreciate God's beauty and skill, we have a vast common ground for real worship. At schools and colleges, we live (specially at hostels) harmoniously with the conviction, that we have a common aim to pursue. This discipline comes handy, when we live amongst members of a large family with varying interests!

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The Divine Plan and Design

(VII) In creating us, God has hoped that we would contribute *our share to the welfare of the country, and specially the community into which we are born:—*

(a) We can never repay the great care and kindness of our parents, that contributed to our healthy growth. We would have met untimely death without their vigilant protection.

(b) Then we owe so much to our *teachers* for whatever knowledge we have acquired through their guidance. Kabir once said that he would never have visualised the hand of God, if his teacher had not pointed it out so patiently. It is the teacher who removed our doubts when we were not sure of our bearings.

(c) Then in the prosperity of our own *country* lies our own security and profit. When the country has peace, it grows faster than during times of turmoil. We are justified in calling our country our "motherland", as she contributes to our economic and physical stability. Our individual welfare and even reputation are bound up with the fame of our native land. If we tarnish our own individual credit, we thereby disgrace our country.

(d) The *religion* which we have inherited from our ancestors, as well as our *community*, looks to us for clean living and spiritual growth. The *Din* serves as our extra "eyesight". Its chart enables us to progress through difficult situations, and we learn the true way of life from our prophet's message. So we have to be faithful to the heritage of religion as well as to its expounder, to learn the mysteries of the universe. The community, of which we happen to be members, expects similar fidelity and helpful co-operation from us all. It is the benefits of many charitable institutions, managed by the community, that enable us to preserve health or receive sound education. We should therefore pay liberally to all such funds as benefit our fellowmen.

In order to preserve the good name and fame of the *Parsis*, we should be strict in our code of morality. Laxity in conduct saps up a nation's inner strength. "Caesar's wife should be above suspicion"; and we have to be extra careful, lest our individual lapses injure the reputation of the community and its religion.

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(VIII). Then we should remember to be economical in using our resources. Those that squander wealth indiscriminately, invite want and poverty. "Making both ends meet" is an art, that requires careful budgeting, and constant eye to all items of expendi-

ture. It is possible to "*create more wants*" and live a life beyond our means. We have to present an account for every pice to our Father in heaven, who provided us the means of a simple life. One who (for the sake of ostentation) lives lavishly, is guilty of breach of trust. God (as per that parable of the talents) would add more, where right use is made of every pice; but would withhold His gifts, if misused. Those who are less fortunate than we, have a right to have a share in our savings. Often it is our own fault, if we are bankrupt by lavish expenditure on things, which we can easily go without. There is also the question of being honest as custodians of money entrusted to us. There is a Persian proverb: "He, whose account-books are correct and clear, should have no fear of the auditor".

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(IX) Finally *it is necessary to live innocently*, that is to say, without having to take the life of other creatures. We should not go in for such "business" as would prosper at the expense of others by cheating them; or looting their resources. An honest man can get full relish even from a slender income. *Life is a struggle*, but it is not a matter for regrets and laments. Innocent cheer would sustain life with the conviction: that *life is also a game!* In sport, one has to venture for success or failure. Life is not always a tragic drama. We can derive much fun even out of difficult situations, poking fun at our own discomfiture. God's own aspect known as bliss, indicates that innocent enjoyment is necessary to make our tasks easy.

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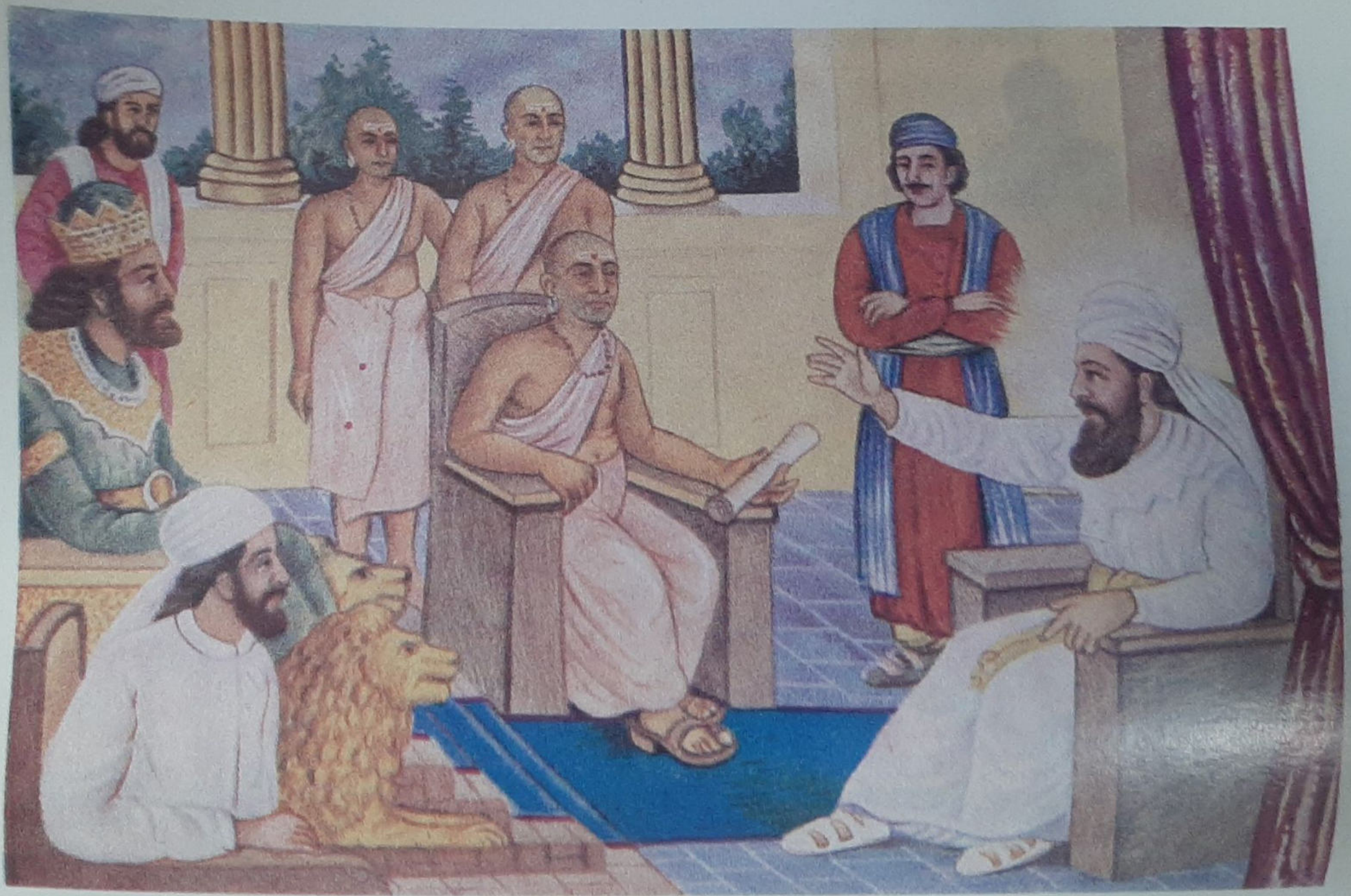
(X) Then we should not forget that *we are not lone fighters*. "God fights on the side of the right"; and under His leadership success is assured. At the same time, we have to act as if we have to depend entirely on our own resources, so that no false sense of

security may be generated. Life has to be made "worth-while," by living according to set rules. May God the gracious shower His blessings on you all, and enable you to achieve true success in all your endeavours! Amen!!





Zarathushtra displays his credentials before Emperor Vistaspa.



Rishi Chandragach in conference with Zarathushtra.

APPENDIX A

SECTION X-B.

THE ZOROASTRIAN CREED

(1) *Before Investiture:*

"My religion is true, perfect, and beneficent and it inculcates the worship of the Omniscient Lord. It is based on the law of *Asha*. It was sent to this world by God, and Zarathushtra was deputed to preach it. I adopt it as my faith from today".

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(2) *After Investiture:*

"I invoke the help of the Omniscient Creator! I shall offer worship to Him, and shall follow Zarathushtra as my spiritual guide. I promise to adore God, and to place firm faith in His judgment. I shall praise all good thoughts, words and deeds. I shall continue to commend my religion, which inculcates beneficence, and which helps me to see unity in diversity. It further expects me to be non-violent in matters of other people's inner faith, and also to practise self-denial, and observe rules of absolute purity. I will consider my religion as the greatest, the most helpful and the most exquisite for me, out of all prevalent religions now and in the future. It was revealed by God through Zarathushtra. I shall attribute all good gifts to God. I shall continue to sing the glory of my faith in this way!

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APPENDIX B

SECTION XI

SOME EXTRACTS FROM ZOROASTRIAN BOOKS

(From the Author's Book : "*Message of Zarathushtra*".)

(adapted with additions and alterations)

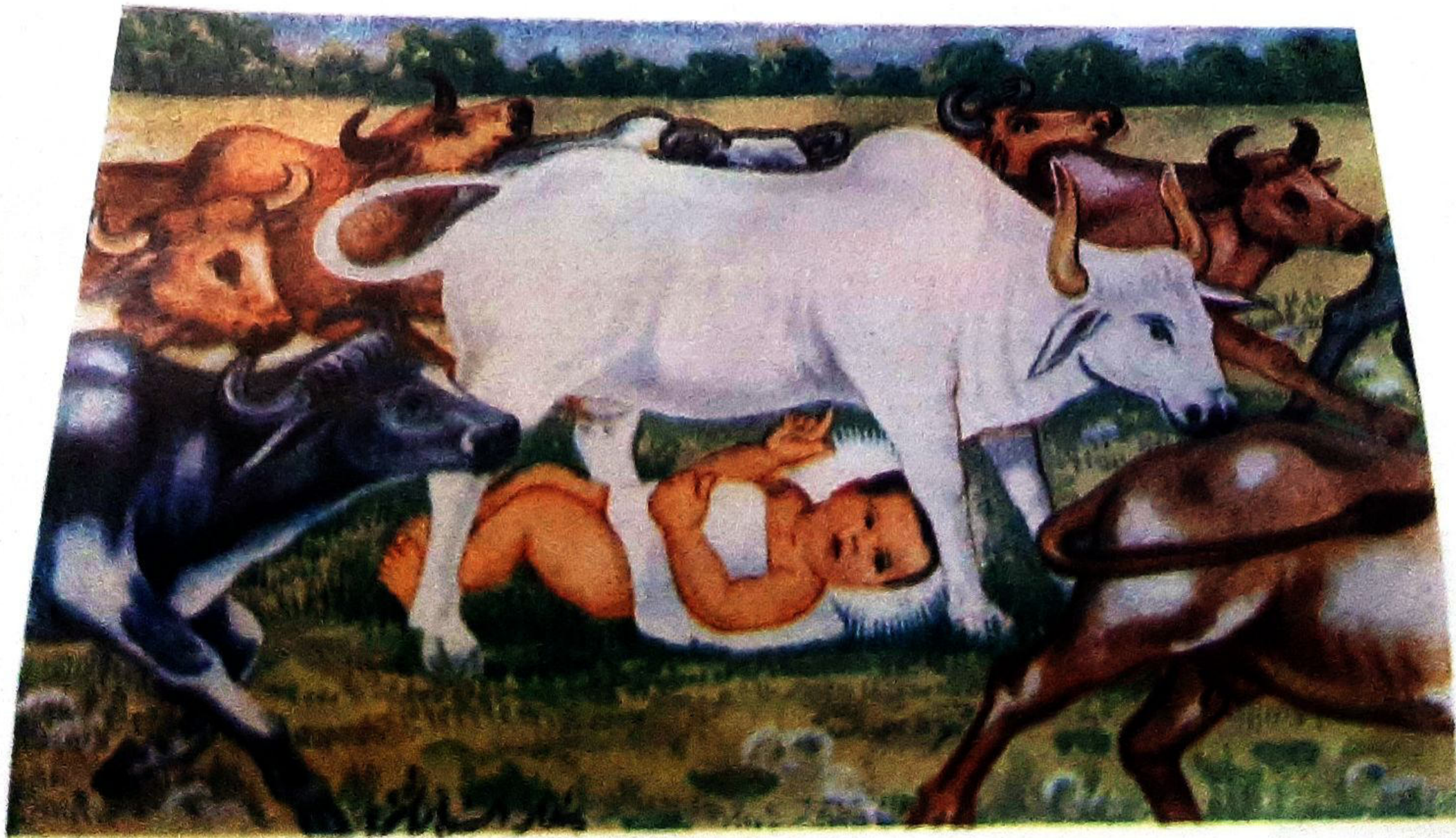
- (1) May the Zoroastrian religion be a source of joy unto each one of you. . . . May you co-operate with the will of God and His Archangels. . . . May you live so as to deserve sacred offering; and may you, in turn, bear such oblations unto God, with your pure life (*Duva Tandarusti*).
- (2) May a child be born unto you, that may lead a holy life, uphold the Prestige of Iran, gain fame as well as a glorious name, and overwhelm the enemies! (*Afrin Buzorgan*).
- (2a) Purity is the best (boon) for each man from his very birth (*Vendidad and Gatha 48-5*).
- (3) God is the wisest Judge; and so may *that* befall us, which He wills! God is the accountant of all living beings (*Gatha 29-4*).
- (4) God is aware of all men and women, who excel in self-sacrifice, through their righteousness (*Yanghe Hatam*).
- (5) Rectitude is the best boon. It is the only source of true happiness. Happiness unto him, who is holy for the sake of purity itself. (*Ashem Vohu*).
- (6) He who helps the downtrodden, will get power from God's Kingdom, He who does good deeds, in God's name, will get the boon of wisdom (*Ahunavar*).

- (7) He alone is happy who renders others happy (*Gatha 43-1*).
- (8) If one knows some aspect of truth, he should act according to it, and should impart it to others (*Haft-Yasht*).
- (9) As long as I have strength to strive, I shall continue to teach regarding *Asha* (the true path) (*Gatha 28-4*).
- (10) White colour is the emblem of the Mazdayasni faith (because it embraces all colours conjointly) (*Meher Yasht*).
- (11) In this abode, may obedience vanquish disobedience!—may peace overcome discord!—may charity replace stinginess!—may wisdom suppress wantonness!—may true word dispel the false one!—and may Truth drive away falsehood! (*Yasna 60-4*).
- (12) May God rejoice at our conduct, and may Satan be abhorred by all (*Nirang Kusti*).
- (13) The Angel *Sraosha* builds a strong house of courage for the poorest. (*Sraosha* = inner voice of conscience) (*Sraosha-Yasht 4*).
- (14) "Zarathushtra is the only individual known to me (*God*) as he had listened to my teachings; and now wishes to work for the spread of the message of *Asha*" (*Gatha 29-8*).
- (15) I pray for right intelligence, with which I may satisfy the "Soul of the World" (*Gatha 28-1*).
- (16) Show us a teacher, who may be wise, fully conversant with both the worlds, and inspired through benevolence—one whom God considers as a dear friend (*Kem-Na-Mazda*).
- (17) All good thoughts, words and deeds have their source in Heaven, and lead us all finally to "the best existence in Heaven" (*Vispa Humata*).
- (18) All evil thoughts, words and deeds are done through lack of intelligence; but they finally lead to bad plight (*Vispa Humata*).

- (19) Those deeds are true, which are in accord with the Highest (Divine) Will (*Nirang Kusti*).
- (20) For each man, there may be the choice of a special type of faith. Let him use the light of his own wisdom (*Gatha 30-2*).
- (21) God the All-seeing cannot be deceived (*Gatha 45-4*).
- (22) I repent for those thoughts, words and deeds, which I should not have entertained; also for those which were good, and yet I omitted to perform the same (*Patet-Pashemani*).
- (23) For counter-acting sin, I may perform good deeds. For pleasing my soul, I may follow the path of *Asha* (*Kerfeh-Mozda*).
- (24) I, Zarathushtra, declare it as my wish, that all leaders should follow me in thought, word and deed, unitedly to practise this religion of Mazda-worship (*Hoshbam*).
- (25) All good deeds of pious men extend to all parts of the earth. May such holy men live long! (*Kerfeh-Mozda*).
- (26) O Immortal Archangels! We dedicate unto you our oblation and devotion—also our good thoughts words and deeds with our faith—nay, we give away the very life of our body for your service! (*Yasna 11-18*).
- (27) I have considered Thee, O God, as the Father of good-will, the source of truth, and the Lord of all activities in the world. (*Gatha 31-8*).
- (28) I beg of Thee two boons: a true vision of Thine, and interrogation with Thee (*Gatha 33-6*).
- (29) I hold fast to the faith preached by Zarathushtra, later propounded by Adarbad (*Patet*).
- (30) I know no other protector except Thee, O the most Holy Spirit! So shalt Thou ever shield me (*Gatha 29-1 and 34-7*).



The Divine Child saved from flames when mother recovers it



The Protecting Cow is guarding Zarathushtra from harm

- (31) Those who do not accept Purity, will find wise benevolence far away from them (*Gatha 34-8*).
- (32) Verily Thy protecting words shall vanquish the enemy. (*Kem-Na-Mazda*).
- (33) In order that I may proclaim Thy religion, please declare to me those activities, that might strengthen Purity in the world (*Kem-Na-Mazda*).
- (34) God is the progenitor of Truth, due to His Omniscience (*Gatha 47-2*).
- (35) A holy person will always vanquish an evil one (*Hormuzd Yasht*).
- (36) God the Omniscient, would impart to an intelligent man, who is pure, those precepts which (to others) are full of mystery (*Gatha 48-3*).
- (37) "Any person endowed with benevolence, may be able to expound my teachings" (says Zarathushtra) (*Gatha 50-6*).
- (38) Zarathushtra gives away the very life of his body to God as an offering; also does he dedicate all his gifts: the fullness of loving thought, the best of his deeds as well as his words. He offers his willing obedience and strength unto the Omniscient Lord. (*Gatha: 33-14*).
- (39) We are the devotees, who revere all good thoughts, words and deeds, done here or elsewhere, now or at any other time; because we remain amongst the benefactors of the world (*Hafta-Yasht*).
- (40) The departed spirits eagerly ask: "Who would praise and love us? Who would offer some sacrifice unto us? Who would remember us, and give away food and clothing for the love of us?" (*Fravardin-Yasht*).
- (41) My son should be endowed with innate wisdom, a ruler over some territory, fit to be chosen for the Elders' council, handsome, respectable, capable of giving relief to men in

trouble, and courageous, so that he may further the cause of education and instruction of the country (*Atash-Niyaesh*).

- (42) The Fire looks at the hands of all who approach it, asking "what has the walking friend (the body) brought, as a gift for the sitting friend (soul)?" (*Atash-Niyaesh*).
- (43) Satan knows nothing, and cannot create anything. God creates, and Satan destroys; but Satan will be ultimately driven away and reduced to dust (*Hormuzd-Yasht*).
- (44) O Zarathushtra! Humility is the best virtue for the world (*Sarosh-Hadokht*).
- (45) Charity is the best virtue for all men in both the worlds. (*Hafta-Yasht*).
- (46) I recognise God as the giver of all gifts and blessings (*Yasna : 12*).
- (47) Even if my bones and my intelligence be separated, I will never abandon this my good religion of Mazda-worship (*Vendidad : 19*).
- (48) Those souls who are generous, wish to know their reward. The souls of the pure desire to reach immortality; the sinful will suffer great hardship. God established this law by His authority (*Gatha-45-7*).
- (49) O Lord, I wish to carry out Thy will, through purity. This is my chosen decision through my enlightened reason (*Gatha 46-18*).
- (50) He who cultivates land (to feed others) does thereby enhance the cause of purity and goodness (*Vendidad*).
- (51) He who does not pay homage where it is due, is a thief of that duty (*Vendidad : 4*).
- (52) O Fire! Thou art a symbol of the Omniscient Lord—the Divine Invisible and most Beneficent Creator (*Yasna : 36-3*).

- (53) We recognise the sun as the most beautiful body of God, as it gives brilliant light from on high (*Yasna* 36-6).
- (54) May Satan the deceiver, be driven away and deprived of his influence over our world (*Yasna* : 8-5).
- (55) O God! Since I saw you in your highest dignity, I have always considered You as the most benevolent Lord, who would give us reward for our words and deeds. Your justice would prevail till the end of the universe: suffering would come to the evil and bliss to the good people (*Yasna* : 43-5).
- (56) I, a Zoroastrian, proclaim it as my creed that I would abhor Satan, just as our prophet did, when God and Zarathushtra had an interview (*Yasna* : 12-6).
- (57) When Zarathushtra was born, the entire creation pertaining to Sepna-mino, expressed their great joy: "Our good luck! Zarathushtra the Teacher is born for us" (*Fravardin-Yasht* 93).
- (58) Zarathushtra upset the scheme of Satan and his evil followers, by praising purity and uprightness. The law of God was proclaimed by him whereby people were full of devotion (*Fravardin-Yasht* 98).
- (59) That reward which Zarathushtra declared as fit for the Magi—namely the highest Heaven wherein God dwells—would also be yours through your loving mind for the benefit of your soul (*Gatha* : 51-15).
- (60) O God! declare unto me the best teachings of our Faith, and such deeds as I ought to perform, so that I would pour forth my heart in gratitude attuned to benevolence and truth (*Gatha* 34-15).
- (61) May Airyaman (the angel of peace and friendship) come to all men and women to give us joy such as was in Zarathushtra's benevolent mind, so that I may deserve the great reward through my faith. I pray for the blessing of Purity which God has deemed the highest (*Yasna* : 54).

- (62) God says: "O Zarathushtra! All the six Archangels are my creation. Immortality is the reward for those who would lead an upright life. This world shall be administered by me through my wisdom to its end (*Hormuzd-Yasht* 25).
- (63) Of all the healers, namely, those who cure with purity, with justice, with the knife, with herbs and with sacred incantations, the last one is the most potent, as he heals from the very source of disease (*Ardibehesht-Yasht*).
- (64) We remember with reverence the great Assembly of Archangels which exists on the highest plane (*Rapithwan Geh*).
- (65) May our souls deserve the highest heaven. May the pious people live long (*Afrin*).
- (66) I bless you, our King! may you live long—may you lead a happy life, so as to help the holy people, and defeat the evil-doers. May the best paradise, brilliant and provided with every comfort, be your lot amongst the pure. (*Afringan*).
- (67) O Mazdayasni people! Be diligent with your hands feet and mental skill, in order to perform appropriate and timely acts, which may prove beneficial. (*Visparad*).
- (68) Those souls that have misused authority, or have perpetrated evil deeds, or have their thoughts words and conscience put to bad use, and whose aura is evil because they strayed away from the path of purity, must return to the abode of illusion to which they verily had belonged! (*Gatha 49-11*).
- (69) O men! You get happiness or misery due to the two high principles, which God has laid down for your education: namely, long suffering for the transgressor, and profit to the holy man. Knowing these two laws, you will derive great deal of happiness (*Gatha 30-11*).
- (70) We respectfully remember, here, (at the dinner-table) the Omniscient Lord, who has provided us milk, water, vegetables, light of vision, financial resources, the earth (for agriculture) and other gifts of life. (*Yasna 37-1*).

- (71) May the holy Fire glow with brilliance, may it burn with effulgence, may it continue to prosper in this our home for a long long time, right upto the victorious Resurrection, and even beyond the "Renovation". (*Yasna 62-3*).
- (72) O God! When the malicious people intend to wreak vengeance on me with an evil intent, who else would protect me except Thy Fire and my benevolence? Pray declare unto me, those deeds, whereby Purity may be augmented! Reveal this for our faith (*Gatha 46-7*).

The End