

...IN SEARCH OF MY GOD

Inscription from the tomb of Darius the Great at Naksh-i-Rustam near Persepolis.

He wrote: "A GREAT GOD IS AHURAMAZDA, WHO MADE THIS EARTH AND YON HEAVEN, - WHO MADE MAN, - AND AMENITY (CIVILISATION) FOR MEN, - WHO MADE DARIUS, KING, - THE ALONE KING OF MANY, - THE ALONE COMMANDER OF MANY. I AM DARIUS, THE GREAT KING, THE KING OF KINGS, THE KING OF THE LANDS OF ALL TRIBES, AND THE KING OF THIS GREAT EARTH FOR AEAR, THE SON OF HYSTASPA, THE ACHAEMENID, - A PERSIAN, - SON OF A PERSIAN, ARYAN, OF ARYAN RACE. THROUGH THE GRACE OF AHURAMAZDA THESE ARE THE LANDS WHICH I CAPTURED BEYOND PERSIA".....

Ruins of a sepulchral tower of fire temple of the Achaemenid Kings, Cyrus or Darius. Sixth century B.C. at Pasargadae.

WHO MADE THIS EARTH AND YON HEAVEN

...IN SEARCH OF MY GOD

COME... JOIN WITH ME,
TOGETHER. YOU AND I WILL GO THROUGH LIFE'S
FINEST ADVENTURE.
THE FORMING OF OUR ROOTS
SOME 5000 YEARS AGO
AND BACK.

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15 th Sept. 1978

TO MY CHILDREN
THE LOST GENERATION

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O gentle reader, tarry but a while,
and learn of the treasures
contained in the pages of this book.

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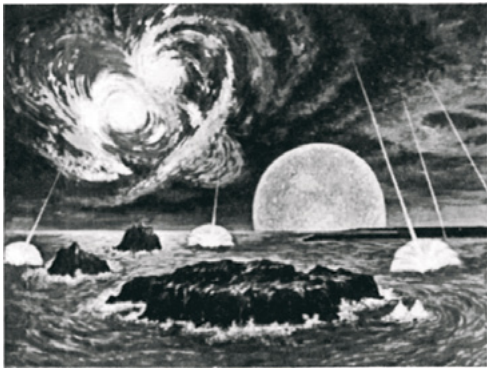
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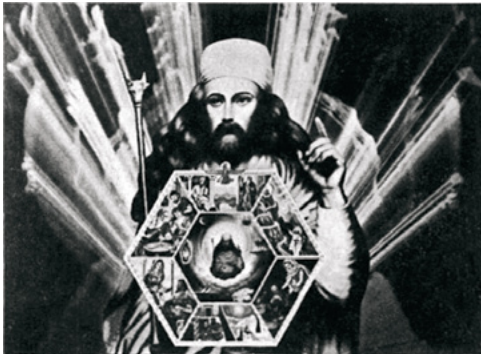
First was the word . . . AHUNA



Hold ! My noble Lords ! Hold



Caravan from CABUL



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The last encounter



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THE REASON WHY

I am a Parsi, I seek to learn more about the Zoroastrian religion and our heritage. It has taken me a long time, but till tragedy shook me, I was complacent and lived within myself.

I know something about my religion, but mostly I have drawn unconsciously from the examples set by my parents and elders. In those days, it was enough to instill in us a faith in our religion and teach us some basic prayers. In time, this faith helped us to overcome one vicissitude after another and, with each experience, our faith in our religion became stronger.

Faith is like the good foundation of a house. It can help one withstand better, the stress and strain of life without collapsing at the first sign of adversity. I did not realise, however, that what was good enough for me was not good enough for my children. They needed to know more about our faith, culture and religion and, for this, I was too busy—till too late.

And so, I started my search from the dusty and musk-filled, rarely opened cupboards of our libraries, through scholarly but dreary books—across the blue skies of the heavens—to the beautiful Sufi Mosque of Iran—the majestic St. Peter and the vaults of the Vatican and the Synagogue of the Jews and finally the Atash Behrams of Bombay and then Udwada. In all these places were enshrined the vital elements of my God.

I would like to state that this is not an intellectual, religious treatise. I am incapable of writing one. I am a father, in quest of information about our religion and looking for ways and means to impart this knowledge to my children, in a manner that would interest them and finally build in them a feeling of pride and faith in their ancient religion, and in doing so, provide a book from which they can read aloud to their children and continue to keep afresh this feeling of pride and faith. I write towards no other end.

Nor is my name relevant. I have only quoted copiously from the writings of learned men, who have painstakingly gleaned our religion and history from the writings of antiquity and a wide range of archaeological sources. Theirs are the quotations and thoughts which brings out with startling clarity the momentous words and divine philosophy of that 'Great Soul', Spitama Zarathushtra. I have only endeavoured to narrate the knowledge acquired from them, in sequence and in a manner which, I believe, would be interesting to the young. I make no claim to any research on this difficult subject.

And so, let me begin.....



RESOLVE UNTO THYSELF...

THAT WHEN THY CHILDREN REACH UNDERSTANDING,
THOU WILT DECIDE ON AN HOUR OF THE DAY,
AND A DAY OF THE WEEK,
AND ON THAT APPOINTED HOUR AND DAY,
THOU WILT READ WITHOUT FAIL EACH WEEK,
A PORTION OF THIS BOOK,
SEEING THAT THY CHILDREN UNDERSTAND,
THE FULLNESS OF EACH SPOKEN WORD,
FOR IF THOU DOST SO,
IT WILT OPEN THE DOORS AND WINDOWS
OF THY CHILDREN'S MIND
AND THROUGH THE CORRIDORS OF THEIR BRAIN,
WILT FLOW THE PURE AND CLEAN AIR OF
GOOD THOUGHTS-GOOD WORDS-GOOD DEEDS
AND BRING THE BLESSINGS OF
OUR LORD AHURAMAZDA ON THY HOME.

...AND FIND TIME FOR THY CHILDREN

This book will live or smoulder in the dust, by the truths it unfolds and the way it portrays them and provokes a parent into using it.

Further, this book is not meant just for the young. It is divided into sections and each will draw the attention of different age groups to it, by the very nature of its contents.

It is often asked, "Can I not get a book on our religion which my child can read by his/her (lonely) self. This book is written with exactly the opposite intention, for it was conceived with the hope that it would bring parent and child together of necessity, at least once a week, so that a communion between them is established and maintained.

It is intended that you read for 10 minutes from this book and spend another 20 minutes explaining with loving care what you have read. These 30 minutes may well become the most precious moments of your child's life and yours, as the years go by.



ZARATHUSHTRA SPITAMA

The first Prophet of the One Supreme God

At the dawn of civilisation

The lives of prophets that shine for us through the dull mists of the past are illuminated as often by fable as by fact. Over the course of centuries fragments of information unearthed by archaeologists, anthropologists, historians and linguists accumulate, until it becomes impossible to separate the man from the myth. The picture that emerges is like that of a gigantic, academic jigsaw puzzle with many of the parts missing, several of them lost forever.

So it is with the life of Zarathushtra. The Prophet, whose teachings had a profound effect on the major religions of the world, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam, remains even to his followers an enigma. His date and place of birth, his physical appearance, his upbringing are all shrouded in ambiguity. Only the Gathas, the dialogues between Zarathushtra and his God, can be directly traced to him. The hymns, as they have come to be known, portray the Prophet as a man of deep intellect, fiery and emotional. It is from the text of the Gathas that the author has drawn his inspiration in writing about Spitama Zarathushtra in the later pages of this book. And it is through the Gathas and later Avestan literature, that one is able to establish Zarathushtra as the first Prophet to preach monotheism, the belief in one God.

The entire corpus of Zoroastrian literature, starting with the Gathas, is said to comprise two million verses divided into 21 books called Nasks. Each Nask contains an original text known as the Avesta and a commentary called the Zend. The term Avesta originally was applied to the sacred texts ascribed to Zarathushtra and his immediate disciples, but in course of time it has come to be applied to all the sacred writings. Of the 21 Nasks, only the 19th, the Vendidad, has survived intact. All the others are in fragments or totally obliterated. Aside from religious subjects, the Nasks dealt with medicine, astronomy, agriculture, botany, philosophy, government, home management and hygiene.

The writing of such a vast body of literature takes many years. In the case of the Jews, the span between the five books of Moses and the holy Talmud is 2,400 years. Therefore, we may assume that the Zoroastrian scriptures, which are of equal dimensions, must cover a similar period. If the Nasks were complete by 400 B.C., as is suggested by Western scholars, then the writings must have begun around 3000 B.C. The case for assuming this date for Zarathushtra's existence is further supported by the realisation on the part of scholars, that to decipher the Zend-Avesta, one must turn to pure Vedic Sanskrit rather than the later Pahlavi. The date of the four Vedas is put anywhere between 5000 and 2000 B.C. Thus, the Avesta being pre-Vedic, Zarathushtra has to be placed as the earliest of the Prophets of the One Supreme God.

If we can, on this evidence, place Zarathushtra at around 3000 B.C., why have so many eminent historians and orientalists placed him at dates varying from

6000 to 600 B.C.? Xanthos of Libya, the earliest Greek writer to mention Zarathushtra, puts him 600 years before the Trojan War (around 1800 B.C.); Pliny places him 5000 years before the same war and several thousand years before Moses. Aristotle and Eudoxus give the era as 6000 years before Plato (4000 B.C.), while Berossos, the Babylonian historian, makes Zarathushtra the founder of a Babylonian dynasty that reigned between 2200 and 2000 B.C. The Behistun inscriptions of Darius I place him at 550 B.C. And contemporary Western scholars put Zarathushtra around 1200 B.C. One possible answer to the puzzle is that there were several Zarathushtras at each of the recorded times. Thus, there was a Zarathushtra:

in Hystaspa's reign (Behistun stone inscription)	550 B.C.
as stated by Xanthos, 600 years before the Trojan War	1800 B.C.
as recorded by Berossos, the Babylonian	2000 B.C.
in Vishtaspa's reign, supported by the comparative time required to write the Avesta and the age of its language	3000 B.C
as recorded by Pliny, a couple of thousand years before Moses	4000 B.C.

This is borne out by the fact that the word 'Zarathushtra' itself was not alone deemed sufficient to distinguish the prophet from other men, and that his family name 'Spitama' is generally prefixed when he is spoken of. This circumstance implies distinctly that there were other Zarathushtras besides the one who was distinguished by the name 'Spitama', and who alone was regarded as the real founder of the Mazdayasnian religion.

This theory also helps explain the riddle of the Behistun stone inscription which places the Prophet at 550 B.C. The Zarathushtra referred to here lived in the time of Darius I's father, Hystaspa. Hystaspa is often erroneously considered to be King Vishtaspa of the Zend-Avesta or King Gushtaspa of the Shahnamah. They are, in fact, of a different lineage. The Avesta declares Spitama Zarathushtra to be the one in Vishtaspa's reign.

This date alongwith that of the language of the Gathas and the time required for writing the sacred literature all meet around 3000 B.C.

Some Europeans call the language of the Avesta, Zend. This is not correct. No name for the language of the Avesta has yet been found. Parsi scholars use the term, Avesta or Avestan, for the language of the Avesta, the language of the Zend is mostly Pahlavi. The general character of the Avesta language in its different dialects is that of a highly developed idiom. It is a genuine sister of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Gothic.

The more ancient portions of the Avesta have been written in what may be called the Gatha dialect, because the most important writings preserved in this peculiar idiom are the five Gathas of Zarathushtra. The later idioms in which most of the books of the Avesta are written may be called Ancient Bactrian or the classical language of the Avesta. The Bactrian language began dying out in the third century B.C. The Alexandrian conquest and the scholarly oblivion that followed his death, creates a gap of five centuries till the Sassanians and the advent of Pahlavi as the Persian language is observed. Pahlavi is totally unrelated to the

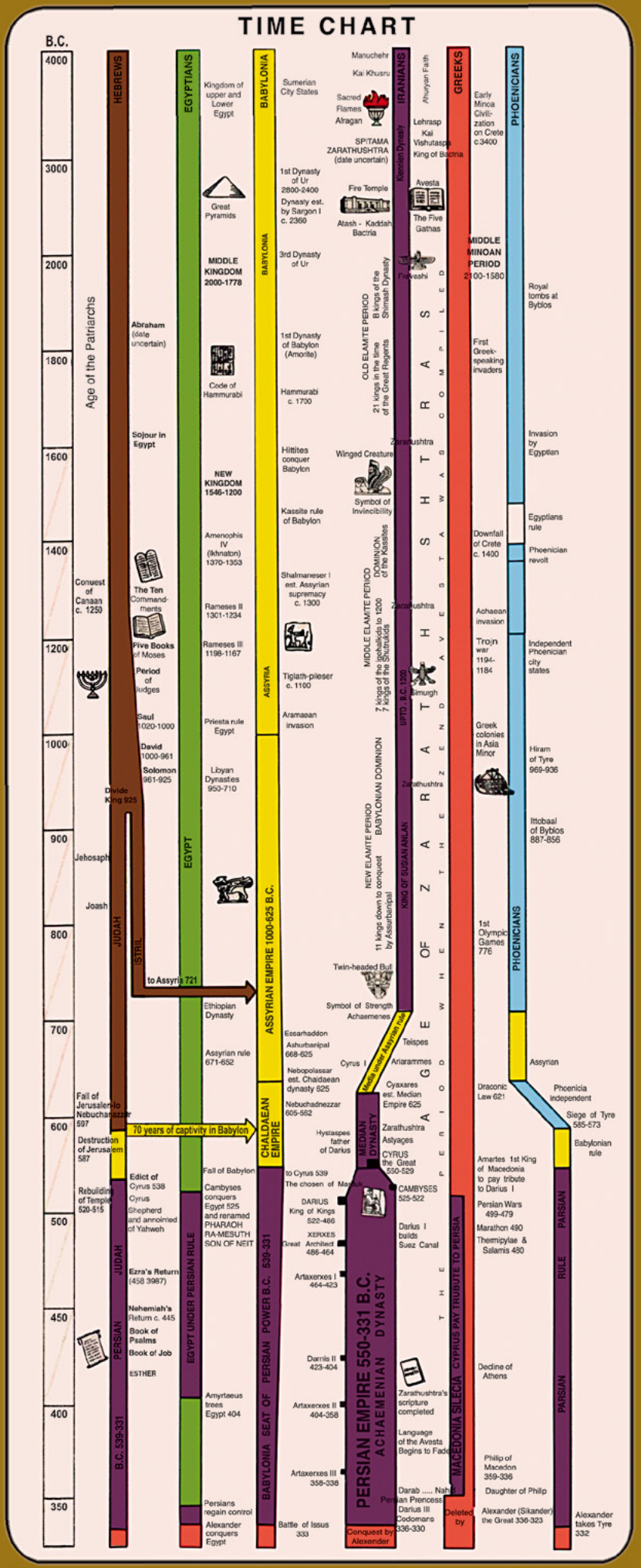
The Texts

Civilisation was born on the plateau of Central Asia and along the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris. The Aryan race came down out of Central Asia and settled in the lands below the Caspian Sea and in the course of centuries reached the Iranian plateau. The Aryan man has played a tremendous role in world history. Hebrew, Greek and Roman civilisations are absorbed more or less by Western man with his mother's milk but is quite unfamiliar with the origin and the land that was the cradle of the Aryan race who were their ancestors. The fountain-head of modern western culture is the Greek civilisation and this received further stimulus when Alexander of Macedon took away the riches of Persepolis and ransacked the libraries of Persia. To quote Levi, "The history of Alexander is part of Persian history, its normal continuation being the Hellenistic age."

Zarathushtra's practical but sublime philosophy and religion began, so to speak, almost with Time amongst the Aryan race. His was the religion of the one Supreme God Ahuramazda. For centuries the Persian knew about punishment and reward, the future life and resurrection in clear and compact terms. Yet, look at all the other religions right upto 600 B.C.— they were austere and their Gods stern, whose vengeance rained down on their slightest displeasure. In 550 B.C., Cyrus the Great, by the grace of his Great God Ahuramazda, conquered all the lands from India and the Hindu-Kush in the East and across Central Asia, to Egypt and Greece in the West. Civilisation was in the tolerant and efficient hands of the Persians for over 200 years. (See Time Chart 550-331 B.C.).

The Persian Rulers, devout followers of Gracious Ahuramazda, the divine religion of Universal Salvation, gave back to each conquered nation freedom of speech and worship. The Persian Emperors even became protectors of their different faiths. Cyrus the Great was called "the Shepherd and anointed of Yahweh" in Israel, and in Babylon "the chosen of Marduk" and his son Cambyses, who conquered Egypt, became known as "Pharoah Ra-Mesuth", Son of Neit, an Egyptian God. (See Time Chart 539-525 B.C.).

Around 450 B.C., amidst Persian traditions and customs, began the flowering of all the other religions. See the Hebrew Book of Psalms, the Book of Ezra, the Book of Job, Esther. (See Time Chart Persian Judah 480 to 350 B.C.). Before 600 B.C. the Old Testament was totally silent on the future, now all these books (the writings of Exilic Prophets) blossomed with hopes of the future life— reward and punishment and even their God mellowed and became loving and benevolent. From the Hebrews came the religion of the Christians and from the Hebrews and Christians, came the religion of Islam and so the rule of one Supreme Being, then entered the world in all its glory.



old language. At one time, because Pahlavi meant Ancient Persian, many took it to include the Bactrian language also. This misapplication of a more recent name of the earlier historical language has created a lot of confusion in attempts at translation of the Avesta. Use of the Pahlavi language to decipher the *Avesta* caused many inaccuracies and distorted the Zoroastrian religion.

It is known from history that one of the two copies of Zarathushtra's complete works was maintained at the Archives of Persepolis, which were totally destroyed when Alexander razed the city. The second set of Zarathushtra's works was plundered by the Greeks at a later date. The Sassanians traced fragments from different parts of Iran and compiled copies of another set of Zoroastrian documents, which the Arabs destroyed in their final conquest of Iran.

His Theology

Spitama Zarathushtra appeared in Iran by divine command to strike out idolators and to prevent the corruption of the religion by magicians and sorcerers. He established a community governed by new laws. His predecessors, the Saoshyanto (fire priests) of whom Zarathushtra was one, worshipped a plurality of spirits called Ahuras, the Living One or Wise Lord. The word Mazda or Great Creator applied to those Ahuras with creative powers. Spitama reduced this plurality to unity and called the Supreme Being, Ahuramazda. In Sassanian times, the name was changed to Ahuramazdi and in modern Persian Hormazd or Ormazd.

Spitama Zarathushtra's conception of Ahuramazda as the Supreme Being is identical with the Hebrew notion of Elohim (God) or Jehovah, which we find in the books of the *Old Testament*. Ahuramazda is called by Zarathushtra, "The Creator of the earthly and spiritual life, the Lord of the whole universe, in whose hands are all the creatures." He is the light and source of light; He is the wisdom and the intellect. He is in possession of all good things, spiritual and worldly. All these gifts He grants to the righteous man, who is upright in thoughts, words and deeds.

The Great God Ahuramazda is Almighty. The universe, and all that is within, has been created by His divine inclination and will. He has no co-equal. A separate evil spirit of equal power with Ahuramazda, and always opposed to Him, is entirely foreign to Zarathushtra's theology though the existence of such an opinion among the ancient Zoroastrians is evident from some of the later writings, such as the *Vendidad*. The dualism—the idea of two original independent spirits, one good and the other evil, utterly distinct from one another and each counteracting the creation of the other—crept in due to a confusion of Zarathushtra's philosophy with his theology

When Zarathushtra gave his inaugural sermon (Gatha Ahunavaiti, Yasna 30) in Iran, he enunciated for the first time the theory of the twin spirits—one good, the other evil or base, both bound together, yet each opposed to the other. According to Zarathushtra, these are two primal streams of causation. One is called Spenta Mainyu, the Beneficent Spirit, and the other, Angre Mainyu, the Evil Spirit. They produce the spiritual and material worlds and are always at war with each other. They do not exist independently but in relation to one another and are a part of this universe.

This mortal antagonism between good and evil spirits dominates Zarathushtra's entire sermon, but one can clearly see that Ahuramazda, the Great God stands above and beyond them, wholly and truly on the side of good. In the Gathas, nowhere does Angre Mainyu (evil) even presume to set himself up as a principle independent of and antagonistic to the Supreme God, he is content to measure

his strength against Spenta Mainyu (good) which emanates from God, yet is not God.

Ahuramazda favours the good spirit, and abhors the evil. He wants us to accept the good — not base. Man is given a choice—for a free will is vital to the essence of goodness. Man is therefore free to choose good or evil, for there is no goodness in forced goodness and if he prefers evil, then man is evil by choice. Along with the right to freedom of choice, Zarathushtra revealed God to be the ruler of the universe, and in the role of rewarder of the good and punisher of evil in the life to come. He also pronounced Frasho-Kereti (lasting life), a clear reference to the immortality of the soul and life hereafter.

The concept of a future life and the immortality of the soul was a common belief of the Magi. Right from the *Gathas* to the Vendidad the theme of the resurrection is present. There is mention of it in the ancient records of the Greeks and Romans. The doctrine of life after death is an integral part of the Zoroastrian credo and evolved from the teachings of the Prophet. The Avesta texts speak of future prophets called Saoshyanto who would appear in this world to oppose evil and to restore the religion of the good life. They are said to “make life lasting” (*Frasho-Kereti*). The greatest of the Saoshyanto to come will be Saoshyas. He will bring with him a new *Nask* (hitherto unknown) of the *Zend-Avesta*. The Saoshyanto to come will be of the seeds of Zarathushtra.

There is mention of heaven and hell in the *Gathas*. Heaven-is called Garodemana or House of Hymns—the angels are believed to sing there and hell is referred to as Drujodemana, House of Destruction. Between heaven and hell is Chinvat Peretu or the Bridge of the Gatherer or the Bridge of the Judge. The soul of the pious alone can cross the bridge, the wicked fall from it to hell. Those whose good and evil deeds are equal, enter purgatory (Hamestagen).

The Zoroastrian heaven and hell spoken of are symbolic, for the heaven and hell are said to be lodged in the soul itself: in the purity of good thoughts, words and deeds in the case of heaven. Heaven and hell lie chiefly within ourselves. There is no threat of flaming hell; external punishment of the soul is no punishment— it is only cruelty, just as external reward is no reward. This concept of heaven and hell predates all faith and these profound ideas— profound only as they are real and yet unparalleled—are the very essence of a pure faith.

Every human being has to understand that his good or evil thoughts, words and deeds are actually preparing and moulding his eternal destiny, that they constitute a highly refined idea of heaven and hell and they will surely bring their own reward or restitution in the final reckoning. This again reinforces the other Zoroastrian theory of subjective recompense. As you sow, so shall you reap. Another essential difference with the Zoroastrian concept of resurrection is that there is no eternal damnation of the soul. At the end of the dark night of punishment—either in hell or purgatory—will come the dawn of the resurrection when evil will have been finally destroyed.

In course of time, the doctrines of Spitama were altered and corrupted due to misunderstanding and fallacious interpretations. Many of the traditions he had rejected were brought back into the faith. This can be best seen by comparing the highly evolved philosophical concepts laid down in the *Gathas*, with those of the later texts such as *Dinkard*, *Bundahishn*, *Dadestan-i-Denik*, which, in Sassanian times and later during the first Islamic centuries, became a second source of Pahlavi religious writings. This later literature reflects a partial abandonment and personification of the philosophic, theologic and moral doctrines of the Prophet and a commensurate rise in the importance of ritual and object worship. Use of the Pahlavi language to decipher the Avesta resulted in further inaccuracies.

In all Zoroastrian prayers and ceremonies reference to the Ameshaspentas and Fravashis abound and some explanation is here needed. The Almighty God being beyond the ken of human senses, man was unable to comprehend Him in His fullness. Zarathushtra therefore sought to make the absolute (Ahuramazda) understood to his people through the concept of Ameshaspentas. The Ameshaspentas are six luminous facets of the Supreme Being to whom is attributed all creatorship his six divine attributes, each an active Intelligence. The Lord Himself is also shown as the 7th and Supreme Ameshaspentas. They are:—Ahuramazda—the Supreme Archangel retains the sphere of human beings under His protection, and allots the other six spheres to the remaining six Archangels.

1. Ardi-behest (Asha-Vahishta i.e. the Highest Righteousness) who governs all luminaries: the sky, and stars above and fire (light,heat) below. He is assisted by the angels: Adar, Sraosha and Behram.
2. Behman (Vohu Manu i.e. the Good Mind or Love) who governs the entire animal kingdom and is assisted by co-operators (Hamkars) Mah-o, Geosh and Ram.
3. Shaharevar (Kshathra Vairya i.e. Authority or the Strength of the Lord) who sees to the mineral kingdom (metals, gems etc.) below the surface of the earth and is assisted by Khurshed, Meher, Asman and Anaran.
4. Spendarmad (Spenta-Armaiti i.e. Devotion and Faith or Intuitive Wisdom) who looks after the surface of the earth (Agriculture, habitations) and is assisted by the angels, Avan, Din, Ashiswang and Marespand.
5. Khurdad (Haurvatat i.e. Perfection) who supervises all liquids from the ocean to rivulets, and is helped by the angels, Tir, Fravadin and Govad.
6. Amardad (Ameretat i.e. Immortality) whose administrative sphere is the vegetable kingdom. He is assisted by Rashne-Ashtad and Zamayad.

Zarathushtra was bold enough to break the mould of other religions by using ‘ideas’ as attributes of his God like Right, Truth, Benevolence instead of heavenly bodies or legendary heroes. This strength and boldness was conceived from the purity of Ahura, incapable of any imperfection or error and so of necessity had to discard ancient concepts of divinity hampered with some tolerance of sin or other weaknesses. In time, these ideas were personalised and became archangels, though the central ideas within did not change.

SRAOSHA (Srosh), who is, however, regarded as an archangel is vested with very high powers. While Ameshaspentas in Zarathushtra’s eyes represented nothing but the qualities and gifts of Ahuramazda, Sraosha seems to have been considered by him as a personality. He is the angel who stands between God and man, the great teacher of the good religion who instructed the prophet in it. He shows the way to heaven and pronounces judgement on human actions after death.

Along with the Ameshaspentas there is mention in the Avesta of the Fravashis/ Farohars (protectors) which are spiritual forces. The Fravashi is depicted as a bird with its protective wings spread out, usually with the head of the good King Lehasp. They were created by God before He made the universe, and are the elements of Ahuramazda in man. They are our guardian angels who watch over our actions, guide us on the path to righteousness and protect us. After our death, the Fravashi assigned to us returns to God pure and sinless, unaffected by all our actions. During the days of the muktad prayers, the Fravashi of the departed returns to earth, but the soul of the person, which bears the responsibility for our deeds, carries on its travail.

The Bountiful Immortals

The Fravashi

The Fravashis are separate entities which are not only provided for each man and woman, but also for the earth, fire, sky, plants, water, animals, the blessed Zarathushtra and all things animate and inanimate. They preserve and promote their well being.

The human personality is said to be constituted as follows: Three parts, material or physical or corporeal, three ethereal or astral or vital and three purely spiritual.

We give below the Avestan terms with their meanings:

Material Body:

- (1) Gaeta—Sensation —material elements
- (2) Tanu—The nervous system— the physical frame.
- (3) Azdi—Sinewy system—skeleton

Soul:

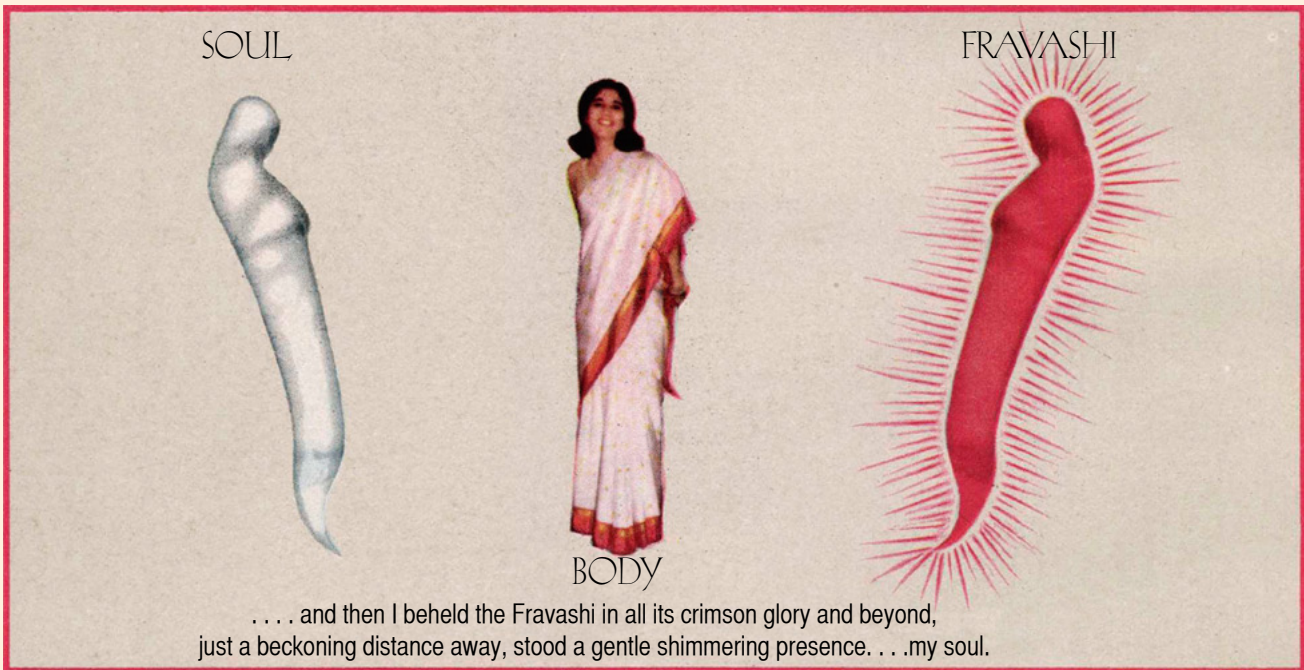
- (7) Ahu—Spiritual life
- (8) Baodaieh — Consciousness
- (9) Daena—Inner self—spiritual perfection.

Astral Body:

- (4) Ustana—Breath of life
- (5) Kehrp—Astral body
- (6) Tevisi—Astral nature

Fravashi:

God's element in man



The soul is the spiritual you. It is man. The body is dust and the Fravashi is the element of God within you.

By mingling the body with its sensory, nervous and sinewy systems, the body reacts to its surroundings and the brain, the seat of Baodaieh, controls all physical activities. Ustana, the breath of life, keeps the body and soul together. Beneath the physical body is the astral shape Kehrp, and Tevisi is the astral nature formed in the process of living.

When a man dies, the body turns to dust. The astral parts Ustana, Kehrp and Tevisi become absorbed into its natural elements. The Fravashi goes back to God, pure and sinless and the soul with its Daena, Baodaieh and Ahu intact stands before Judgement Bridge to carry on its travail.

Throughout life the Fravashi faces and beckons to the soul to follow its path and to be guided by its light.

Doctrinal origins

The Zoroastrian religion has many concepts in common with Judaism and Christianity, the most notable among them being the resurrection of the dead and the archetype of the devil. For many years scholars have debated the religious origins of the concepts. Some speculated that the doctrines sprang up independently of each other. But recent findings of Western scholars note the marked absence of belief in a future life in the *Old Testament* of the Hebrews, right upto 600 B.C. It is only in the *Book of Job*, written after the Jews were in bondage and exposed to the Assyrian and Persian traditions, that one finds a blossoming of the belief in life after death.

As E.W. West, Professor of Oriental Studies at Oxford University notes, "Few Christians will be disposed to admit that they owe their ideas of the resurrection and the future world to the traditions of the Mazdayasnian religion; and yet they will find it difficult to disprove it. Let those who doubt this fact ascertain how many decided references to the resurrection and future life they can find in the earlier scriptures of the Jews, written before they came in contact with the Assyrians and Persians, and then compare them with the more frequent references to the same subjects in the later *Psalms* and *Prophets*, the Book of Job, and the *New Testament*, all written after the Jews had become acquainted with Persian traditions. In fact, the Book of Job has some appearance of being a translation, or adaptation from a Persian or Assyrian text."

In the Ten Commandments there is no reference to last judgement, iust reward or punishment, or future state. Similarly in the pre-exilic Bible of the Hebrews there is no mention of heaven or hell. As Dr. K.T. Cheyne states, "It is no longer excusable to study the *Old Testament* religion without comparing it with Zoroastrianism. Essenism (a Jewish religious brotherhood at the time of Christ) becomes clear when one admits a Zoroastrian influence. In Zoroastrianism, Fravashis voluntarily assumed mortal bodies to help fight for God and against evil, and from this it seems reasonable that the later Essenes' beliefs of the Descent of the Soul must have come from Zoroastrianism. Even the Essenian Drama of the Soul is like a piece of Hebraized Zoroastrianism."

In his book. *The Dawn and Twilight* of Zoroastrianism, Zaehner writes of "The Two Spirits in the Dead Sea Scrolls. An almost exact parallel to this solution of the problem of evil is to be found in the Manual of Discipline, perhaps the most interesting document of the Dead Sea sect of Qumran. That Judaism was deeply influenced by Zoroastrianism during and after the Babylonian captivity can scarcely be questioned, and the extraordinary likeness between the Dead Sea text and the Gathic conception of the nature and origin of evil, as we understand it, would seem to point to direct borrowing on the Jewish side." Zaehner continues to state that:

"According to the account given in the Manual of Discipline, God created man to have dominion over the world and made for him two spirits, that he might walk by them until the appointed time of his visitation; they are the spirits of truth and of error. In the abode of light are the origins of truth, and from the source of darkness are the origins of error. . . . And by the angel of darkness is the straying of all the sons of righteousness. . . and all the spirits of his lot try to make the sons of light stumble; but the God of Israel and his angel of truth have helped all the sons of light. For he created the spirits of light and of darkness, and upon them he founded every work and upon their ways every

service. One of the spirits God loves for all ages of eternity, and with all its deeds he is pleased for ever; as for the other, he abhors its company, and all its ways he hates for ever. Here, in a Jewish setting, we have an exact parallel to the attitude of Ahura Mazda to the Holy and Destructive Spirits. Like the Jewish God, Ahura Mazda abhors the company of the Destructive Spirit, and all its ways He hates for ever'; but His hatred is based on rather more rational grounds than is His Jewish counterpart's, for He did not create the Evil Spirit evil: He only becomes such by choice."

Referring to the resurrection of the body Zaehner writes "Of all the doctrines of Christianity that the modern scientific mind finds hard to swallow, the resurrection of the body is the hardest. This dogma, which Christianity inherited from Zoroastrianism, the Zoroastrians themselves found hard. The Prophet himself is represented as questioning his God concerning this doctrine which seems to fly in the face of reason."

Zarathushtra did question this fact and asked Ahuramazda how he would accomplish this and God replied, "If I am the Creator of the earthly and spiritual life, the Lord of the whole universe, in whose hands are all the creatures, then surely what I have created once, I can re-create again." With this it is believed Zarathushtra accepted the above.

One of the greatest authorities on the Avesta, Rev. Dr. Lawrence H. Mills, Professor of Zend (Avesta) Philology at Oxford University, in his article, "Zoroaster and the Bible" noted, "From the second to the seventh, they (the seven Ameshaspentas) are personified thoughts sent forth from the mind of God to ennoble and redeem His people. That the general description of such an important conception as this, lying as it does at the logical root of Zoroastrianism should have become known to the Jews of the Captivity and to their descendants before the date of some, if not of all, Exilic Prophets, is scarcely less than certain."

Further the *Book of Nehemiah* discloses scenes with Persian monarchs. Section after section of the Bible dates from their reign, while Magian priests, who were of the religion of Cyrus, came later to do honour to the Son of Mary, and one of the last words uttered by Christ upon the Cross was in the Aryan tongue, "Paire-Daize." It is worthy of note that while in the Old Testament there are hundreds of Aryan words, in the Avesta there are only two or three Semitic words.

As Mills further notes, "During the shock and sorrows of the Captivity, the Jews turned their thoughts from earth to Heaven, because the temporal rewards promised the righteous had proved illusory. . . . Then came Cyrus, the Persian king, conqueror and occupier of Babylon, and the illustrious liberator of the Jews. With this change in their immediate circumstances, they were reassured that the Psalmist had indeed 'never seen the righteous forsaken',. . . and from then their doctrine of reward and future life began to take shape amidst the legions of the Iranian Empire, who for generations had already a well-formed concept about punishment and reward in the future life. What wonder then, that the Jews listened to the unconscious expressions of their new-formed friends in Persian Babylon and so their doctrine grew."

"The time is now past, when the Christian apologist recoiled from recognizing the very important services which have been rendered to the Holy Faith by peoples foreign to the Jews. And surely no one will look askance at the happy fact that not only a small nation to the West of the Jordan held to those great truths on which rest our hopes beyond the grave, but that the teeming millions of Persians also held to them in successive generations long earlier than the prophets

Rev. v. Dr. Mills, in his book, *Our own Religion in Ancient Persia*, commenting on dualism said, "I very seriously raise the solemn question whether the Jewish writers of the Old Testament earlier or late at all really believed their *Yahveh Elohim* to be absolutely supreme in so far as to have been the *creator of either Satan, or of Baal, or of any of the Demon-gods*. We know indeed that they, the Jewish prophets, accredited the existence of these Beings as a matter only to emphatically real, and by no means uninterruptedly regarded them as being altogether creatures of the imagination (see the frequent comparison of them with Yahveh Elohim). But when, and in so far as, they thus believed them, these gentile gods, to be really existing spiritual beings, in how far did they then suppose their own Yahveh Elohim to have been their original creator, either bringing them into existence as being holy in their nature before a fall like "Lucifer's," or causing them to arise as being originally of evil character? The question is very serious. The foolish relief offered us by the doctrine that Yahveh Elohim, as God the Father, was not responsible for the fall of beings who He foresaw would become evil when He created them, is no longer available, and could not have long continued to satisfy any sober-minded sage; —but if the leading Jews in large numbers thus in due sequence unconsciously, or openly, rejected the view that their good God Yahveh originally created the Evil Gods of their enemies—directly or indirectly, in any shape or chain of causality or responsibility whatsoever, then such ancient Israelites were in verity, though they may not have been consciously, dualists."

The Great God Ahuramazda is Almighty. All that exists, exists through His will and has ever so existed. He has no opposite, nothing is without Him or so opposed as to define Him. Nature is a discovery of opposites, but nature is His creation and He uses its results as He does all things for a supreme purpose. Without the recognition of differences, no consciousness can exist and the pang of misery is to help be able to enjoy and appreciate the thrill of joy and the calm of peace.

He has detail, His actual deeds and attributes are made up of them. He can never be defined — but we can approach a definition. Every opposite found out is an added item in raising that great edifice made up of differences out of which we approach Him. Nowhere is He arrested or described. Sorrow cannot say to Him Here is your limit' nor Pain declare, 'Me you never made'. For Ahuramazda has no equal. He is all-inclusive, for He is Supreme.

From the above can be seen that with the creation of the universe and with the birth of nature—the principles of opposites began to take shape. With the good comes the bad, night is followed by day, joy with sorrow and so possibly Zarathushtra conceived the idea of the devil, sin's author and nature's evil principle and made it personal, thereby clarifying evil in man's mind and giving it a definite shape and an evil personality, something to be shunned and avoided and so came Angre Mainyu the lord of all evil, followed by his other self, Ahriman, the demon of demons with the destroyers Drukhsh and Buiti.

Religion should be a living force in our life, and should not be confined to a study of scriptural texts. Our behaviour should reflect our religious beliefs and principles.

Thus a true Zoroastrian is unassuming and humble. He is "a bridge over a gulf dividing two sects, a person who perceives the underlying unity of things." He never forces his beliefs on another. In matters of inner convictions he fears no threat of violence. Zarathushtra's first sermon speaks of a "light of reason"

Dualism

**Zarathushtra's
God Ahuramazda
is Supreme.
He has no equal,
He has no opposite**

**Satan enters
the universe**

**Chief Principles
of the
Zoroastrian
Religion**

Universal Salvation for all the Righteous

in accordance with which each man must formulate his beliefs. The Persian Achae-
menian empire expanded to many countries but force was never used to compel the
conquered to accept the message of Zarathushtra. Truth, when perceived freely and
voluntarily, has a firm foundation in one's heart.

The Zoroastrian doctrine of self-sacrifice (Khaetwadath) enjoins on all of us to first
consider the welfare of others. We grow by giving and not by acquisitive greed. We
are trustees of what we possess and must willingly share our gifts. Wealth is only a
“sense of well-being,” which is enhanced through participation by many. If you wish to
be happy, make others happy. As we render others happy, we are entitled to similar
bounty from God. Knowledge, art, wisdom and skill are considered “wealth”, and is to
be shared equitably amongst all who need it.

The virtue of Ashoi is so comprehensive in its field, that the term has 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 Ashoi is Druj, which implies decep-
tive habits that injure the soul.

If we have undertaken to fight against evil, we have to be prepared for tests and trials,
especially during our struggle against poverty, disease, frustration and occasional set-
backs. Constant vigilance is needed against the wiles of Satan. Just as Zarathushtra
withstood all temptations, so must we.

God's laws are just and benevolent. His kingdom is ruled wisely. Whatever betide,
weal or woe, our trust and faith in His dispensation must never waver. Even pain may
prove a teacher, for there are no accidental lapses in His just administration We must,
therefore, live without doubts and without complaints.

The Zoroastrian Law of Recompense is very clear and precise. If mental powers are
dissipated, the mind will suffer. Misuse of sight affects the eye. A merciless man kicks
a bundle of grass to bring it within reach of a starving cow. In the other world, his whole
body with the exception of that leg is covered by ulcers.

Thoughts and words are regarded as aspects of action. If a person refrains from theft
or any other crime, simply owing to-fear and not from a loathing of the evil itself, his
character, because of this thought, remains infamous. A man who makes a malicious
speech that injures another has no place in heaven. Zarathushtra's heaven is pure in
thoughts, words and deeds.

The great poet, Rabindranath Tagore wrote of Zarathushtra, “With the hope of get-
ting merit, men fearfully follow the path of blind formalisms, which have no moral source
in the mind. This will make us understand the greatness of Zarathushtra. Though sur-
rounded by believers in magical rites, he proclaimed in those dark days of unreason
that religion has its truth in its moral significance, not in external practices of imaginary
value; that it is to uphold man in his life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

“In Zarathushtra's teachings, which are best reflected in his Gathas, we have
hardly any mention of the ritualism of worship. Conduct and its moral motives,
such as Vohumano, Ashoi and Armaiti have received the sole attention in them.”

Zarathushtra was the first prophet who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrow-
ness of the tribal God, the God of a chosen people, and offered it to the universal man.
This is a great fact in the history of religion. The Master said, when enlightenment came
to him:

*Verily, I believed Thee, O Ahuramazda, to be the
supreme benevolent Providence,
For / beheld Thee as the Primeval Cause of all creation.
For by Thy perfect Intelligence Thou shalt render just
recompense for all actions, good to the good,
evil to the evil, till the last day of creation.”*

The Avesta is a document of universal salvation for all the righteous. Virtuous men of all
creeds are to be respected and emulated by us, for salvation is in righteousness.

The Gathas bring out the powerful personality of the Prophet. He taught people to ac-
cept the settled life of a farmer over that of a nomad, and made known that peasantry
was better than pillage.

Zarathushtra was a fiery man—a man of action and of deep thoughts. He made clear that
the ideal of life was not to be reached by ecstasy and meditation alone or by observing
the cloistered virtues of a hermit who flees from the temptations of the world or the ascetic
who seeks salvation for himself.

Zarathushtra was active, practical and militant. Those who served God best he main-
tained, were those who rendered active service to God's creation. The legitimate joys of
this world are not to be stifled; life is pleasant and enjoyable, and living in the midst of the
world's joys and sorrows enables one to touch the various chords of human life.

In this wholesome philosophy, life becomes more full, more complete. Social and do-
mestic virtues are developed and character strengthened. This enables man not only to
contemplate righteousness, but to carry it through into action and in the process, destroy
wickedness. In the final analysis, to destroy all evil in the world is God's final goal.

Some thoughts of Zarathushtra as a Man and Saint

THE ZOROASTRIAN CONCEPTS
SUBLIME IS THE RELIGION OF ZARATHUSHTRA

THE AMESHASPENTAS : The Bountiful Immortals.

1. Asha Vahishta (Highest Righteousness)

2. Vohu Manu (The Good Mind)

3. Khshathra Vairya (Authority, Strength of the Lord)
4. Spenta-Armaiti (Devotion)

5. Haurvatat (Perfection)

6. Ameretat (Immortality)

In the highest conceivable sense, the Supreme Being is said to be possessed of these attributes; simple yet mighty in essential principles which alone can save this life from chaos and the universe from hell. They govern the Supreme God Himself and could help guide us for our living as well. Nothing could be more sublime and impressive.

THE TWIN SPIRITS: God created the universe and with it were born the Twin Spirits—both inseparable and part of this world. One chose to be good, the other evil. Ahuramazda abhors Angre Mainyu, the Evil Spirit, and advises man to choose the ways of Spenta Mainyu, the Good Spirit, for evil brings death and destruction, the Good Spirit immortality and perfect life. By this, God clearly shows man the path to Him.

THE FRAVASHI: In response to the Great God's desire to save His creation and mankind's destruction by evil, sparks or elements from His Being descend from the heavens and take their post in mortal bodies, in animate and inanimate objects and begin their fight against evil. They guide human beings through life, towards the right path and tend and promote the wellbeing of all creation. The Supreme Being stoops to protect his creation. Tremendous is the sweep of this mighty, yet, sublime God.

KHWARENAH: In Pahlavi it means “own-work”. As every man has his Fravashi, so does he also have his Khwarenah, his destiny, not in the sense of a predetermined fate, but that for which you are created, your own perfection, your final cause. More specifically, the Khwarenah is the fulfilment of God's purpose, for “the Creator created his creation for action, and specified for each individual creature his own sphere of action.” The Khwarenah is not a kind of mystic aura. It is the “agent or force” through which the Creator works out the salvation of His creation; for its proper function is to save and bring about salvation, to ennoble and to cause to be ennobled every entity which possesses it by means of each entity's own Khwarenah and what is proper to it.

It is not only individuals who have their individual Khwarenah, their jobs to perform; each household, village, province, and country has a Khwarenah in common, a communal duty which is yet individual to each. And above these national aspirations there is the Khwarenah of the whole world, of all the seven climes which must strive together to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of the common destiny, and since all Khwarenah is from God, it instinctively seeks to return to God.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT: When God advises man to follow the path shown by Spenta Mainyu, the Good Spirit, He also tells him that the good will be rewarded and the wicked who follow Angre Mainyu, the Evil Spirit, will be punished in the life to come.

SUBJECTIVE RECOMPENSE: This is total justice where reward and punishment is selfinduced. Nowhere else can you find the wicked's own soul shriek and mock and lead him to hell from Judgement Bridge; and where else does his own Daena (one of the three sub-divisions of the soul, see page 10) typified by a beautiful maiden, meet and reward the blest man on the path to heaven again of ‘good thoughts, words and deeds? Listen to the beautiful words of the Daena in reply to the blest man:

HADOKHTO
NASK
YASNA 22

“What maiden art thou,” he asks her, “who are the most beautiful of maidens that even / have seen?—And she, who is his Daena, answers: “/ am verily. O youth, thy Daena, thy good thoughts, words and deeds, thy very own. “ But he asks her—”Who hath desired thee hither. “And she answers: “Thou hast loved me and desired me hither, O youth, even thy good thoughts, words and deeds . . . contenting the righteous saint who came to thee from near and from afar. —It is thus thou hast made me, who am lovely, still more lovely, and me who am beatified still more beatified. . . through thy good thoughts, words and deeds.”

“Virtue is here for the first time in history, “its own reward” and vice its own punishment”.This is the justice of an infinitely Just God.

HEAVEN AND HELL: As Zarathushtra said it in just a few words, “it was all in the soul” Those who know of the mental tortures, one can suffer even in this world, can appreciate the

mental hell, the soul could suffer surrounded by its evil thoughts, words and deeds. No pit of hell devised by any other religion could be more profound or more terrifying to a soul. Likewise, heaven is the mental bliss of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. The concept is deep and appropriate in its reward or punishment.

RESURRECTION: All souls are the loved ones of our God. He desires strict punishment for the wicked and milder penance for the wayward; for the good there is reward. But there is no eternal damnation and the total destruction of the soul. If one has chosen to be evil, one must be punished and correctly guided. At the final resurrection, when evil has been destroyed, all souls will be redeemed and will live the good life in a world of good thoughts, words and deeds. A loving God can do no more.

UNIVERSAL SALVATION:The translation given below of one of the three most sacred prayers, is appropriate here. It says

YENGHE HATAM
(SEE PAGE 56)

That man, indeed, who makes his every act
An act of worship, led by Ashoi's Law.
Is deemed as best by Mazda Ahura;
Each one of these, who have been and who are,
With reverence will / recall by name.
And strive to emulate his every holy deed.

Zarathushtra refers to all righteous men, irrespective of their colour or creed, and we are asked by him to emulate the deeds of such righteous men. For to our God, who is the Supreme Ashoi (Righteousness) there is salvation for all righteous men. Here was a Great God devoid of all Self. To Him all souls were His soul.

THE RELIGION OF THE GOLDEN MEAN: The mean, indeed, is said to be the essence of the religion, the Law of God. The mean is of God, excess and deficiency of the devil. In the material order, the mean manifests itself as health, excess and deficiency as sickness; in the spiritual order, the mean consists in virtue, while excess and deficiency appear as vices. Each virtue is seen as the mean between the vice that is its contrary and the vice that is an exaggeration of itself; and to preserve the true mean it is important that one should not fall into the kindred vice when seeking to eliminate the contrary one. Courage must not be allowed to degenerate into anger, desire into lust, thrift into stinginess, modesty into cowardice.

For the Zoroastrian, life in this world is to be lived fully, without avoiding the joys and sorrows. We are asked to live a good life, a moderate life without excesses—the life of the Golden Mean. Living thus, we achieve God's aim.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE: A God-given right to man to choose between good and evil. A free will to act as man chose and if he so desires even deny God Himself. To rise to godly heights, man should be able to rise above himself, face evil and temptation and choose God and so rise to the levels he was ordained to reach. Man was to turn to God in full knowledge and with love derived from understanding of the truth. This was man's goal placed for him by his Great God Ahuramazda.

THE GOOD MIND: This is one of the most powerful concepts placed before man by Spitama Zarathushtra. The mind is the seat of Baodaieh (consciousness) and it is also the centre controlling all thought and reason, which in turn control man's actions and is therefore the source of all man's activities. If you will cultivate your mind and make it good, it will become the source of all virtues and the mind which is the eye of the soul then begins to see things spiritually and right-mindedly, thereby growing in moral stature with ever increasing virtues and righteousness. To see by your mind, is to think, and the act of thinking is thought and so we come from Good Mind to good thoughts which also bring good deeds and righteous acts, wherein truth and generosity rank highest. How simple—yet how powerful.

These are lofty concepts of an infinitely just and loving God. Professor R.C. Zaehner calls Zarathushtra a “religious genius” of all times. This is too limiting and mortal. He was a “Great Soul” and the divine laws of his sublime religion was the result of Ahuramazda's divine inspiration to him, a profoundly experienced revelation.

How else would it be possible for a man living 5000 years ago, to stand amongst his people and bring forth such a magnificent religion—compact and clear whose precepts have influenced all the major religions of the world to come.

WHAT MAN HAS DESTROYED,
WITH GOD'S GRACE
LET MAN RE-CREATE

... IN SEARCH OF MY GOD





FIRST WAS THE WORD... AHUNA

IN THE BEGINNING,
there was time, only time—
Boundless Time.
Then God in His Greatness
created the word 'Ahuna'
and when first this word
was enunciated, it erupted
in empty space, to energise
and activate the atoms to
create the Universe, in a sea
of fiery red molten rocks
and hard granites forming
continents with a
flaming burning moon
just a stretch away.

CREATION

First was the word... Ahuna

IN THE BEGINNING, there was time, only time—Boundless Time.* Then God in His Greatness created the word ‘Ahuna’ and when first this word was enunciated, it erupted in empty space, to energise and activate the atoms to create the universe. Pleased with what he saw, God decided to create man in His likeness and so it came about that Gayomard, the first man, began life on earth and soon a commune of primitive people took shape and in time prospered and multiplied.

The Aryas (The Noble Ones) or the first of the Aryan race were idolaters. The roll of thunder, the flash of lightning, bountiful rain, all had their Gods. From time immemorial, this little band of people had been split into two sects—those who followed the Ahura religion and those who followed the Devas.

The Ahuras decided to settle down and cultivate their fair land of Aryana—Vaeja (Valley of the Noble Ones) far to the North. The Devas preferred to remain nomads and slowly moved East and became in later times the founders of Brahmanism. The language of the Ahuras was called Avesta and that of the Devas became Sanskrit. The people were of common stock and their languages became sister tongues.

*descriptive term to denote eternity, has no religious significance whatsoever.

The country had descended to evil times. Demons and sorcerers roamed the land of the Ahuras and filled it with pain and misery. God’s displeasure was great and He saw that salvation for this tortured land was only possible by the presence there of a ‘Great Soul’.

Even as He contemplated this necessity, the soul of Mother Earth came before the Lord Ahuramazda, who was holding court with His Ameshaspentas, and appealed for His help and beseeching Him cried,

GATHA
AHUNAVAITI
YASNA 29

*“Passion and oppression enmeshes me all around:
AHUNAVAITI reveal to me a Strong One, who can save me.*

*Then the Creator asked Asha-Vahista: ‘Who shall be her saviour?’
Having no such saviour in mind, Asha replied: ‘Alone Ahura
judges what is best, so happen unto us whatever He wills.’
The Lord said: ‘Mazda Himself has in the Holy Word of
sacrifice (the Ahuna Vairya) ordained the sweets of
Mother Earth to all who serve.’*

*Then He asked Vohu Manu as to who might bring succour
unto all mankind.
Vohu Manu had no reply, so the Lord himself said,
‘One such well-known to Me is Zarathushtra Spitama.’*

*The name being till then unknown, Mother-Earth bewailed:
‘Shall ever there arise the One / dream who shall protect me?’
After some reflection, she got reconciled to her lot and
said: ‘Bestow Thy graces on Him: for now, O Mazda, do
we all accept Him for our guide and Lord, Thy noblest son.’”*

He, therefore by divine inclination caused the birth of Spitama Zarathushtra in this great wilderness, to bring His people to a true realisation of the Unity of God and His Greatness.

Long before Zarathushtra was born to this land, his arrival was proclaimed in the sky by visions of his Fravashi. Again and again, the heavens made this known in different supernatural ways. Then at the moment of his nativity, his mother’s home was enveloped in a brilliant halo of divine light, while gloom filled the forest and wilderness where the demons and sorcerers roamed, and a strange wailing and moaning rustled through the trees.

The parents of Zarathushtra were Pourshaspa and Doghdhova. When Doghdhova was first with child, she began having strange and frightening dreams. A dark mist seemed to cover her home and fierce animals and vicious reptiles poured forth to destroy the life within her. Her terror was great, but before her nightmare could do her harm, a voice within calmed her, whispering, “I am of the Lord and He is my Saviour.” Even as the words assured her, the dark mist was pierced by a mountain and a flaming angel strode forth with a wand in one hand and a book in the other. He threw the book at the reptiles and scattered them, then he threw the wand at the tiger, the panther and the wolf, and they dropped dead. Slowly, the Archangel Sraosha soothed her to sleep, telling her, “The Lord looks after His own, and your son will come with Divine Grace to save this world. He will become the Prophet Zarathushtra of the Lord and bring peace and happiness to the land.”

Zarathushtra was born in the town of Rae. on the river Darji in the province of Azarbae-zan, on Kurdad, the sixth day of the month of Farvardin 3000 B.C. (see pp. 5). The babe smiled at his birth, and the onlooking parents were filled with great love and hope for the future. Knowing the child’s destiny, they named him Zarathushtra of the Spitama family—Spitama Zarathushtra (He of the Golden Light).

Darasarum was the chieftain of this land and, unknown to many, was a sorcerer with an evil following. Zarathushtra's birth struck terror in the hearts of this evil band and so their campaign to murder the child began.

They stole the babe and put him in the path of stampeding cattle. But an angel whispered softly in the ears of a cow and she stood firm over the little one and thus saved its life. At another time, he was put into a wolves' den after the cubs were slain, yet no harm came to him. Even when the child Zarathushtra was thrown onto a bundle of burning faggots, the flames died down and the faggots became a bed of roses. Finally, in desperation, Darasarum tried to stab the child to death, but his fingers became stiff, the dagger fell from his hand, and for the rest of his life he lost the use of his arms.

At the age of 15, in keeping with the Ahuryan faith, he was invested with the sacred Kusti. From then on he took active part in the religious life of the community and learnt all the different mysteries of the faith. Having learnt all he could from the elders, he observed their problems and troubles. He now felt the need for deeper meditation and inner contemplation to spread peace and happiness in his land.

Without word or warning, he disappeared from his home and wandered into the wilderness, up into the hidden heights of the mighty Elbruz mountains to converse with his Divine Lord and Master. There he spent 10 solitary years in prayer and contemplation, calling on Ahuramazda for His help and guidance.

Satan tempts
Zarathushtra

At this time, Satan offered Zarathushtra the kingdom of the entire world, palaces and great riches, if he would only forsake the Lord. When he refused, Satan threatened to destroy him.

VENDIDAD
FARGARD 19

"From the northern quarter, Anglo-mainyush, the deadly, the demon of demons, rushed forth. Thus spoke the evil-doing Anglo-mainyush, the deadly: Drukhsh (demon of destruction)! rush forth and kill the righteous Zarathushtra. Then the Drukhsh rushed about him, the demon Buiti, the destroyer, intending to kill.

Zarathushtra recited the Ahuna-Vairya; he invoked the good waters of good qualities, he confessed the Mazdyasnian religion. Drukhsh was overthrown by it, the demon Buiti, the destroyer intending to kill, ran away. . . .

To him spoke Anglo-mainyush, the creator of evils: Do not destroy my creations, O righteous Zarathushtra ! Thou Pourushaspa's son, from birth thou invokest.

Curse the good Mazdyasnian religion, (then) thou shalt obtain fortune such as King Vadhaghana obtained.

To him replied Zarathushtra: / will not curse the good Mazdyasnian religion, not (if my) body, not (if my) soul, not (if my) life should part asunder...."

And so all Satan's threats came to naught.

THE SUPREME ASHOI - IS THE LORD AHURAMAZDA

Spitama Zarathushtra

The Lord commands

Then came the revelations—the times when Zarathushtra's spirit left his body and moved to the highest levels seeking enlightenment. Always, so far, the Archangel Sraosha had been the intermediary and the interpreter of his different revelations.

Now came his moment of greatest purification and total enlightenment—his conversations with and visions of the divine Ahuramazda. On the final day of his Daena (enlightenment) the voice from within the sacred flames said unto Spitama,

*"You are now ready, Zarathushtra.
Go forth into the world again,
Drive out the demons and sorcerers.
Bring realisation unto the People,
that there is only one true and Supreme Being.
Nothing existed before Me, and everything exists through Me.
I was—I am—I will remain till eternity.
I am the Light, Truth and Wisdom.
From Me proceeds all Authority.
I am the Creator, the Supporter, the Preserver,
the Destroyer and the Ruler of the Universe.
I am Omnipresent.
I am He, who is most beneficent and most merciful,
I am, who I am.
Go, Zarathushtra—Go!
Go forth and tell this to the People."*

So Zarathushtra, along with some kinsmen, turned his steps towards Iran. He began to preach, with little success, sometimes also suffering imprisonment at the hands of antagonistic monarchs. But he sought out those sovereigns all the same.

Zarathushtra's early despair At first, no one paid heed to him, not even his friends and kinsmen. Denounced as a heretic, he wandered from place to place before he could make a single convert to his faith. Deserted by kinsmen, forsaken by friends, harassed by foes, and persecuted by evil spirits, he turned in despair to his Lord and asked:

GATHA
AHUNAVAITI
YASNA 46

*"To what land shall I turn, whither shall I go.
Forsaken by kinsmen and nobles, am I;
Neither do my people like me.
Nor do the wicked rulers of the land.
How then, shall I please Thee, Mazda Ahura?"*

*This I know, Mazda, wherefore I fail.
Few are my flocks, and few my followers,
In grief I cry to thee, Ahura, behold it.
Help me even as friend unto friend
Show me through righteousness the riches of the
Good Mind."*

At last, he found his first convert, his cousin Maidhyomah, and resolved to pursue the great cause.



His inaugural sermon

Under orders from God, Zarathushtra wended his way towards the court of King Vishtaspa of Bactria who ruled over a kingdom seething with dreaded magical practices, polytheistic beliefs and degrading superstitions. As at the town of Rae, Zarathushtra's birthplace, so here too in Vishtaspa's dominions, the higher powers were debauched for personal ends. The world seemed to have sunk into the quagmire of the black arts, and none but a masterful and pure individual, awakened in spirit, could overcome the frightful reign of terror of the sorcerers.

Taking strength from God, in one of the first gatherings of the people of Iran, Zarathushtra spoke unto them and said,

GATHA
AHUNAVAITI
YASNA 30

"I will now tell you who are assembled here the wise sayings of Mazda, the praises of Ahura, and the hymns of the good spirit, the sublime truth which / see arising out of these sacred flames.

You shall, therefore, hearken to the soul of nature (i.e. to plough and cultivate the earth); contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind!

Every one, both men and women, ought today to choose his creed (between the Deva and the Ahura religion).

Ye offspring of renowned ancestors, awake to agree with us (i.e. to approve of my lore, to be delivered to you at this moment) !

In the beginning there was a pair of twins, two spirits, each of a peculiar activity; these are the Good and the Base, in thought, word and deed. Choose one of these two spirits! Be good, not base !

And these two spirits united created the first (the material things); one the reality, the other, the non-reality. To the liars (the worshippers of the many Gods), existence will become bad, whilst the believer in the true God enjoys prosperity.

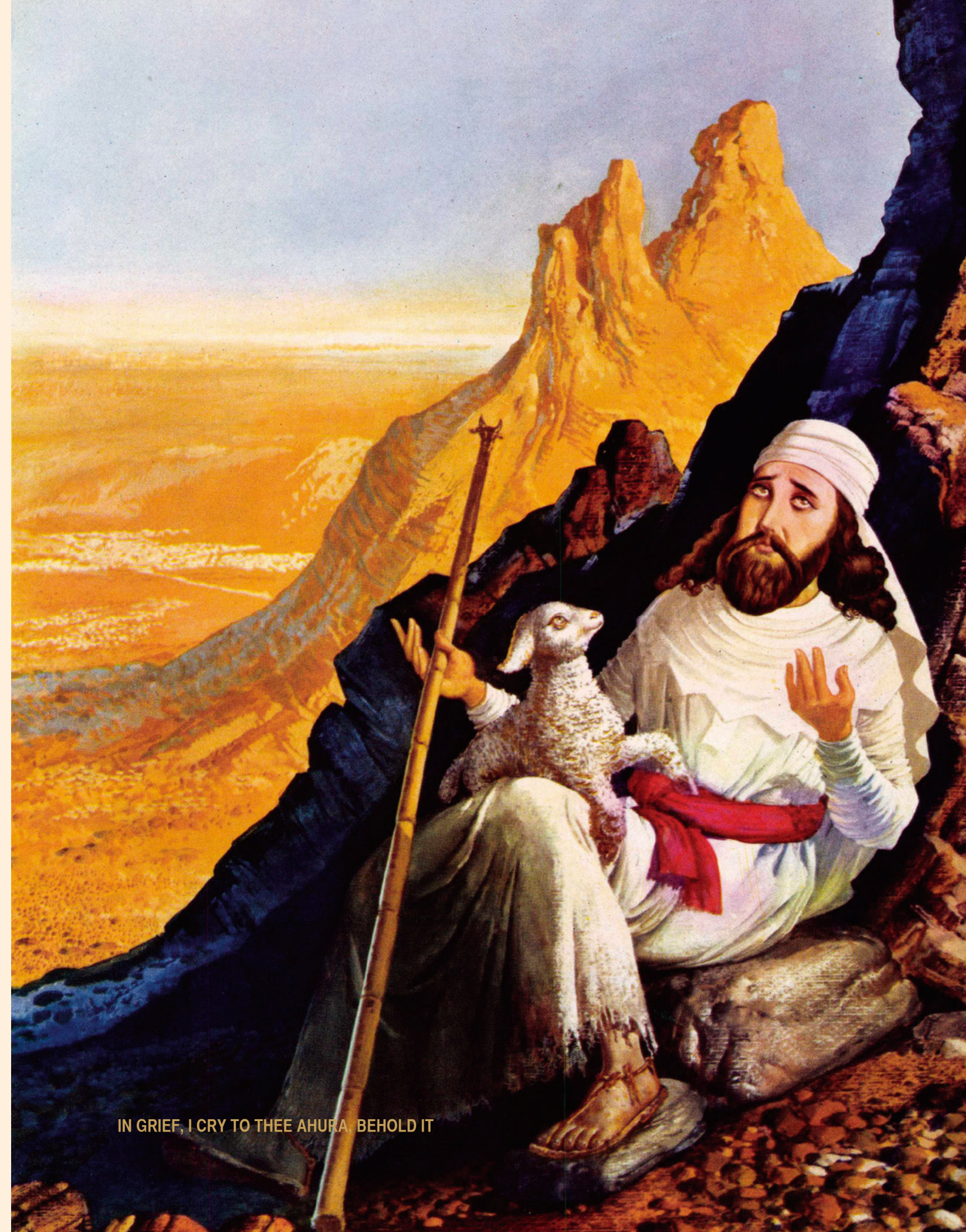
Of these two spirits, you must choose one, either the evil, the originator of the worst actions, or the true holy spirit.

Some may wish to have the hardest lot (i.e. those who will not leave the polytheistic Deva-religion), others adore Ahuramazda by means of sincere actions... .

Thus let us be such as help the life of the future and make it lasting (Frasho-Kereti).

The wise living spirits (archangels) are the greatest supporters of it... .

Therefore, perform ye the commandments which, pronounced by Mazda Himself, have been given to mankind; for they are a nuisance and perdition to liars, but prosperity to the believer in the truth; they are the fountain of happiness."



IN GRIEF, I CRY TO THEE AHURA, BEHOLD IT

The origin of evil

In this inaugural sermon, Zarathushtra tried to induce his countrymen to forsake the worship of multiple gods and bow only before Ahuramazda and to separate themselves entirely from the idolaters. He brought before them the idea of two primal causes, good and evil, both subject to the one God Ahuramazda, and advised them to accept only the good. By this, man was given the freedom of choice and therefore the responsibility to do good or evil belonged to man. He also placed before them the role of God as Punisher of Evil and Rewarder of Good. Finally, he used for the first time, his two famous words “Frasho-Kereti”, meaning “make life lasting”, a clear reference to the immortality of the soul and life hereafter.

Many are the traditions about the singular achievements of Zarathushtra on his way to King Vishtaspa’s capital, and the terrible fate that befell kings who declined to accept his ministry and to forsake their vile practices. At Vishtaspa’s court he had to fight for a foothold and contend with the intrigues and plotting of the “wise men” and courtiers around the King. Disputations without number took place and by and by the utter and systematic discomfiture of Zarathushtra’s opponents.

He was then accused of black magic by a number of conspirators, who placed unhallowed objects like heads of dogs, nails and hair under his bed. Finally he was cast into prison, Vishtaspa condemning him as a necromancer. Then followed the episode of Asp-i-Siyah, the famous black horse of Vishtaspa which was in pain and had its legs drawn up into its belly. The king could neither eat nor drink, seeing his beloved steed immobilised in distress. Men from far and near, including Vishtaspa’s own wise men, came to help, but none could cure the horse.

His misery was great when one evening the guard outside Zarathushtra’s cell brought the king a message that his prisoner could cure Asp-i-Siyah. Immediately the Holy One was sent for and the horse brought into the audience hall on a wooden platform. All gathered to see what Zarathushtra would do.

Now, all antagonism gone from him, Vishtaspa said, “O Zarathushtra, cure my Asp-i-Siyah and prove the greatness of your God.” To which came the reply, ‘ Look at your horse, Sire, see its legs are withdrawn and embedded in his stomach. I cannot do much, you are the only one who can save him. I can only help you save him.” Vishtaspa looked bewildered and cried, “I have done everything and failed. Tell me what to do, I will do anything you say.” Smiling, Zarathushtra said, “Look again at your horse, O great King, he is not ill. His illness is in your mind. Open the doors and windows of your mind. Let in the pure and fresh air of Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds and let it flow through its corridors. Do not keep it shut to the enlightenment I bring you.”

Vishtaspa looked still more bewildered and wailed, “But how?”. Then Zarathushtra, looking squarely at the King, said, “Look at me, O great King! Have faith in me! Believe I am truly the Messenger of the One Supreme God and the first door of your mind will open.” Then in a penitent voice the King replied, “Yes, I was wrong to doubt you, I do believe you are the Lord Ahuramazda’s messenger.” There was a clatter of a hoof on wood; without turning around, Zarathushtra pointed with one hand at the horse. There was fear in the eyes of the people in the crowd, then amazement, followed by joy, for one of Asp-i-Siyah’s legs came free.

A murmur went around the court, “Glory to Zarathushtra and his God.” “Now, Sire, open the windows, let the noble Prince Asfandiyar and the gracious Queen Kitayun come forward,” said Zarathushtra. Asfandiyar, noble of men, tall and handsome, came forward and bowed. Zarathushtra looked affectionately

at the youth and said, “Brave one, gallant Prince, do you believe in the Lord, and will you promise to use your strength for him and spread his religion?” Asfandiyar replied, “I do and most certainly will.” There was a deep stir of emotion amongst the crowd, for at that very moment, the next leg of the noble steed came free. Facing the Queen, Zarathushtra went on, “Now! gracious Queen, blessed with a wise husband and a brave son, do you believe in our Lord Ahuramazda?” The Queen, with tears streaming down her cheeks replied, “I have always believed in your greatness and will willingly accept your God.” The third leg was now freed.

Turning to the King, Zarathushtra said, “Now, call the keeper of my apartment and question him again, Sire!” The keeper stood trembling before the King and the entire conspiracy against Zarathushtra was bared. In a thundering voice, Vishtaspa said to the evildoers, “You are banished from my land, and if I set eyes on you again, you’ll lose your heads.” Even as the words fell from his lips, there were cries all around “Look, look, your majesty!” There stood Asp-i-Siyah on all fours, looking as well as ever. Vishtaspa bowed and said, “ O Zarathushtra! Forgive me, your God and you indeed are great.” Zarathushtra only raised his arms above his head and proclaimed in a loud voice. “ O Ahuramazda! accept your follower King Vishtaspa.” And so, the mental block in Vishtaspa’s mind being cleared, the beauty and truth of the Zoroastrian religion could not be denied and the royal family became Zoroastrians.

To convince Vishtaspa beyond doubt, Ahuramazda made His two Archangels Behman and Ardibehesht descend into the palace of Vishtaspa with the Holy Fire Meher and filled it with a radiance past description. This sign fully confirmed Vishtaspa’s belief in Zarathushtra. He became established in the court of Vishtaspa as the Prophet of the country. People from far and near began to hear of his fame and flocked to his court.

From distant Greece in the West to Hindustan in the East, people of all climes and races thronged to hear the Holy Zarathushtra speak of his great new religion.

It was just such a day among many at the court of King Vishtaspa. At a signal from the King, Zarathushtra arose to speak. A striking figure in spotless white, the eyes deep and piercing, the brows high and commanding, his face was lined and etched with the fierce beating of the wind and the sand, the sun and the rain. Yet there was a softness and a glow, a calm brilliance that radiated from within, that entranced and drew onlookers to him.

The loud buzz faded into silence as he rose and his voice, clear and strong, vibrated through the vast audience hall. “Great evil surrounds this world of ours and there is sorrow and pain amongst our people in the different lands. Demons and sorcerers rule at will. To break this evil force and to bring joy and happiness to all people, I have travelled far and wide, up mountains, down dales, spent time and shed tears, looking for the truth and for answers to the mysteries that shroud this earth.

“At last, I have been granted Grace, and enlightenment has flowed through me. The Great Lord Ahuramazda, the Supreme Being, has appeared to me in visions and has spoken to me through our Sacred Fires. What has been said to me, I find so simple and so all pervading in its truth, that all will understand easily.

“First, there is only one Supreme Divine Being. He is the Creator, the Supporter, the Preserver, the Destroyer, and the Ruler of this entire universe. He is omnipresent. He is infinitely just and He is all merciful. He is called Ahuramazda, the One who has No Equal.

Zarathushtra .. .the reformer

ORIGIN OF EVIL

I will now tell you who are assembled here the wise sayings of Mazda, the praises of Ahura, and the hymns of the good spirit, the sublime truth which I see arising out of these sacred flames.

In the beginning there was a pair of twins, two spirits, each of a particular activity; these are the Good and the Base, in thought, word and deed.
Choose one of these two spirits! Be good, not base!

Of these two spirits, you must choose one, either the evil, the originator of the worst actions, or the true holy spirit.

Gatha Ahunavaiti Yasna 30

SATAN ENTERS THE UNIVERSE

With the creation of the Universe and the birth of nature, the principle of opposites began to take shape. With the good came bad, with joy came sorrow, night followed day. Without the recognition of differences, no consciousness can exist and the pang of misery is to help be able to enjoy and appreciate the thrill of joy and the calm of peace.

So Zarathushtra conceived the idea of the devil, sin's author and nature's evil principle and made it personal. Thereby clarifying evil in man's mind and giving it a definite shape and an evil personality, something to be shunned and avoided and so came Angre Mainyu the lord of all evil followed by his other self, Ahriman the demon of demons with the destroyers Drukhsh and Buiti.



"His is the religion of Ashoi — the doctrine of Righteousness and the Good Life. The eternal truths he has made known to me are 'Manasni, Gavasni, Kunusni'— Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds. Follow these self-evident truths and yours will be the life of joy and happiness.

"In this world, there are both good and evil, and the conflict between them is apparent in almost all human transactions and affairs. Your duty is to strive against the evil. You may succeed; or you may fail. But you must go on trying, remembering that the first of the Lord's teachings is 'that the highest virtue is virtue for the sake of virtue alone.' To be disheartened, to give up, to abandon the fight for the good, is a sin. Something to repent of and not to repeat. The good is best served when serving our fellow human beings. Cruelty is a vice, consideration for others and charity, are virtues.

"Telling the truth, forswearing the lie, is an essential element in the fight for the good and against evil. From which it follows that one's word is sacred, not to be broken, however difficult the circumstances. What you promise, you must do. You cannot have recourse to duplicity, double-dealing, cheating, fraud of any nature or deceit. You must be honest, straightforward, frank, prepared to speak out and act against wrong-doing, whoever the doer.

"Justice and courage are essential in the fight against evil. Industry and hard work are good for us. Idleness, intemperance and greed are vices for which payment will have to be made at the final reckoning. After death comes judgement, when a man's deeds speak for themselves and lead to his salvation or otherwise. This then is the essence of the religion I preach, where good is the motivating principle of the religion of Ashoi.

"If some of you have found my words stern and joyless, then learn that this religion may be stern, for as you do, so shall you be requited; but far is it from being joyless. Gaiety and laughter are part of being good and fighting for the good. You can face the world cheerfully, knowing your duty and knowing that, if you do it, you need fear no man. No spirit, no devil can distress you. With Ahuramazda's strength behind you, you can face all things boldly. For with it, evil will vanish like a bad dream."

Then from among the visiting courtiers, one rose and asked, "You have spoken of the Sacred Fires. Are you not one of the fire worshippers?" Zarathushtra faced the man and replied, "Once the ancients did worship fire, without the true realisation of their actions. In my religion, the one I now place for all men to see and learn, I say that I honour the sun and fire, both being forms of light, as the most formidable and beneficent of Almighty God's bounty. Without them, what was life? Dark, dank and demonish. Man came into his own and was able to face the jungle of huge, frightening animals and slithering serpents, the forest of his own mental fears and of the many spirits and devils, that he thought were lying in wait for him in the dark, when God sent fire and light to his aid."

"The All-Powerful Ahuramazda is the Creator of all things, including fire and the other elements, but because He has bestowed on it a special power and usefulness, it is worthy of a special status and while we stand before our Sacred Fires, note well, we address our prayers to God Almighty.

"Therefore do not call us fire worshippers; instead say that we are worshippers of the One Pure God and the fire is a symbol of His purity and strength.

"Finally the Almighty God wishes you to consider this life on earth as something precious; in fact, it is His most precious gift to you. Live it well and graciously. There is no need for penance or fasts and no mortification of the flesh is called for. Keep before you the purity of Ashoi. Remember the three Eternal



THE PROPHET

Truths and in doing so, all you need do is honour your God daily, be a good father, a good neighbour and a good master.”

Everyone was amazed and struck with the simplicity and the sublimeness of Zarathushtra’s new faith. The visitors from far-flung lands who filled the court had further incontestable proof of his superhuman knowledge and powers and so, before long, they accepted the new faith.

Zarathushtra journeyed through the country, preaching his new religion and laid the foundation for the 21 Nasks that were to follow which showed the magnificent reach of his mind. One Nask had been provided for each of the 21 words of the most sacred formula of the mighty Ahunavar prayers.

Everywhere Zarathushtra found people beset by fears of the devil and of evil doers, and he said to them, “Believe in Ahuramazda, the one Supreme Being, and when trouble comes your way, I give to you, the Lord’s Talisman, and it will drive all afflictions and evil away. They are the three most sacred prayers taught to me by my God. They are, Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Ashem Vohu and Yenghe Hatem. Say any one of them or repeat continuously even one of these words. The Lord has promised at the first call, the help of the mighty Archangel Sraosha by your side.” And so, there was great rejoicing in the hearts of the people, and the demons and the sorcerers were slowly driven away.

There was now greater peace in the land. The peasant toiled on his farm and brought forth the fruits of his labour; others who knew how to spin and weave, found time to work harder and produce more cloth, and, likewise, others in diverse labour produced more, and wealth and happiness increased.

**Thy word is
Thy bond** But one thing still saddened the heart of Zarathushtra. People did not keep faith with one another and promises were easily broken. In the days gone by, to lie, cheat and double-cross had been a way of life. Now with the blessings of God, a measure of peace and wealth had come to the land, but old habits die hard and he found himself sorely tried when he found that people thought nothing of lying or breaking their given word.

At every assembly he addressed, Zarathushtra stressed the value of truth. He made the congregation understand that to lie was the work of the devil and to break one’s word was a greater crime. For if a people fell into deceitful ways, how could the Lord trust them? There were always those who would cry, “No, with the Lord we cannot do so.” Then Zarathushtra would answer, “Why with the Lord only? Is it because you fear Him? Is it because you feel you will lose His protection? Then, know that the Lord wants you to keep faith with Him because you believe in Him and you love Him, or else the value of your words will be lost and your association with God will be weakened. Therefore it is very important in your normal life always to keep your word and forswear the lie, for if you will train yourself to do so in the small things of life, you will find that in all things, big and small, you will be able to act in a way that would make God believe in you and your word.

“Much have I suffered in my quest to bring you the Lord’s message of Truth and Ashoi, but you cannot attain these heights without learning to keep your word and avoid lying. I place before you, my talks with the Lord.

GATHA *“The False prevents the righteous everywhere from*
USHTAVAITI *helping man along the upward path.*
YASNA 46 *He worketh not as friend, he is dangerous.*
 All suppliants who come, though they be false.

*the strong wise man (righteous man) shall turn
their erring steps from ‘soul-destroying ways’
(broken promises/falsehood) to self-reliance
wisely shall he guide. . .
But if the strong one helps not thus to change the wicked,
he himself shall get ensnared and become supporter
of Untruth....*

*He who treads the path of Righteousness, the path of
Service, that thou hast best decreed, shall march across Thy
Judgement Bridge...”*

“You may be a righteous man, but if you meet with one who is false to his promise and his word or lies, it is your duty to correct this man with all your strength or else you yourself will be considered to have committed a wrong. From all this you will see that if you lie and break your word as you live your life, you will surely find no place in God’s love.”

As more and more people accepted the Zoroastrian faith, the importance to the initiation ceremony (Navjote) took on an added significance. In the Mazdyasni faith, as it was now called, the Sudreh had been added to the Kusti and set out in greater difference the Ahuras from the Devas. With the flocking of people to the new faith, the Navjote or baptismal, also became a public declaration made in front of the Sacred Fire and before priests, relatives and friends by an individual of his acceptance of Ahuramazda as the Supreme Being.

And so as Zarathushtra moved from village to village, city to city, he explained at length the importance of the Navjote ceremony and the open declaration of faith called for from each individual. He said, “Either you are for the True God or you are not, the choice is yours.” Many cried out from the congregation, “O ! Zarathushtra we believe in you and our Lord Ahuramazda, but why must we wear the Sudreh and Kusti? Is our acceptance of the faith not enough? Do you not believe in us?” Zarathushtra walked up to the nearest of them, put his hand on his shoulder and, smiling at him, spoke softly, “Of course, I believe you. But I also believe that if you are deeply committed to your faith, you should be proud of the Lord and proclaim it in unmistakable terms to all the world. The wearing of the Sudreh and Kusti becomes the token of your faith.”

Zarathushtra added, “Know further, the significance of these two holy vestments. The Sudreh is spotlessly white and denotes the purity of Ashoi. ‘Sud’ means beneficial’ and ‘reh’ means ‘path’—the Beneficial Path, the Path of Ashoi. The Sudreh is also a reminder of the life hereafter. For this you have the ‘Giroban’, a little rectangular pocket on the front which reminds you that as you do in your life, so will you be required in the life hereafter.

“The Kusti is the girdle around your waist. The three loops are to be taken to remind you of the three eternal truths, Manasni, Gavasni and Kunusni. The four knots, two in front and two behind, are to remind you of your four acts of faith: that you have promised to remember my teachings and beliefs; that your struggle against evil is to be unending; that you will follow the path of Ashoi; and that you will keep faith with the Lord. Finally, the two ends of the sash represent the good and the evil in life, and knowing this truth, you must prevail over evil.” Zarathushtra looked around at the now silent crowd and continued, “So when you wear the Sudreh and Kusti, you keep alive a covenant between man and his God. If you do away with them, it is

Sudreh and Kusti .. .Covenant between Man and God

THE THREE ETERNAL TRUTHS

MANASNI - GAVASNI - KUNUSNI

Good Thoughts Good Words Good Deeds

as good as a denial of your faith; for it is evidence of being ashamed of professing it and, more than anything else, a rejection of the instrument of a holy contract. Lastly, the Sudreh and Kusti are the basic tools of communicating with your God, for as you must know, all prayer—all communication with the Lord—opens with the saying of prayers with the Kusti. How then would you talk to your God?

Stretching out his hands wide, shaking his head, Zarathushtra concluded, “For me, it is unthinkable to find one man or woman of our faith without the Sudreh and Kusti. On the other hand, by honouring God in this way, the Lord Ahuramazda will be pleased and will say; ‘For those who love Me enough and will honour Me by making known their faith in this manner, I shall regard them as true soldiers of my legion and the Sudreh and Kusti will be as armour for their protection from trouble and evil’.” The hush was overpowering and the people dropped to their knees and like a ripple welling outwards from the one whom Zarathushtra touched, they firmly answered, “We believe in you and our God and will honour the Lord for all time and will keep faith with Him.”

And so, Zarathushtra moved from place to place, talking, preaching and helping people in trouble, and at all times talking about the Lord Ahuramazda and His revelations, which he composed into the Gathas.

There are five Gathas, which are Zarathushtra’s personal works. They are *Ahuna-vaiti*, *Ushtavaiti*, *Spenta Mainyu*, *Vohu-Khshathra* and *Vahisha-Toishti*.

The second is the most important and gives his followers a true image of the Prophet’s mission, activity and teachings. In the first portion of this *Gatha*, Zarathushtra announces his mission by order of Lord Ahuramazda. In the second section, he receives answers about the highest matter of human speculation from the Supreme Being. In the third, he appears before his followers as their Prophet and proclaims his new doctrine.

One of his favourite places was Lake Urumiah in the West of Iran. Alongside the lake was a little mound, on which he liked to sit and meditate. To the left were rolling fields with people industriously toiling and to the right were wooded groves and trees, where nested some of the most beautiful birds. In front were the placid waters of the lake. People knew where to find him and clustered around the mound, waiting for him to emerge from his meditation and speak to them.

The evening breeze was cool and the gentle lapping of the waves was persistent. His hour of meditation over, Zarathushtra slowly opened his eyes and seeing the people around him, smiled, for he knew their purpose and understood their longing to hear him speak.

He slowly began, “When I first began my communion with the Lord, I was a little awed and bewildered, a little frightened, and my words sometimes came in torrents, sometimes smoothly. I now repeat the words that passed between us then.

(THE MISSION)	<i>“Blessed is he, blessed is every one, to whom Ahuramazda,</i>
GATHA	<i>ruling by His own will, shall grant the two</i>
USHTAVAITI	<i>everlasting powers (health and immortality).</i>
YASNA 43	<i>For this very good / beseech Thee (Ahuramazda).</i>
	<i>Mayest Thou through Thy angel of piety,</i>

Gatha Ushtavaiti

The Mission, Human Speculation, Prophecy

*Armaiti, give me happiness, the good true things,
and the possession of the Good Mind.*

*I believe Thee to be the best being of all, the source
of light for the world, Every one shall choose Thee
(believe in Thee) as the source of light. Thee, O Mazda,
beneficent spirit !
Thou createst all good true things by means of the
power of Thy Good Mind at any time, and promisest
us (who believe in Thee) a long life.*

*This very man (Sraosha) may go (and lead us) to Paradise,
he who used to show us the right paths of happiness
both in the earthly life and in that of the soul (future life),
in the present creations, where Thy spirit dwells, the
living, the faithful, the generous, the beneficent, O Mazda !*

*I will believe Thee to be the powerful benefactor, O Mazda !
For Thou givest with Thy hand, filled with helps,
good to the righteous man, as well as to the wicked,
by means of the warmth of the fire strengthening the good things.
For this reason the vigour of the Good Mind has fallen to my lot.*

*Thus I believed in Thee, O Ahuramazda! as the furtherer
(of what is good): because I beheld Thee to be the primeval
cause of life in the creation,
for Thou, who hast rewards for deeds and words, hast
given evil to the bad and good to the good.
I will believe in Thee, O Ahura! in the last
(future) period of creation. . . .”*

Lest some have not understood, I would have you know that I have asked here the blessings of the Lord to help me guide mankind to his highest goal (heaven). I am aware that He was there before creation and my faith in Him grows as I know that He deals justly with the good and the bad. I am His devotee for all time and, when difficulties come, I shall do as He has taught me, following truth and not compromising with evil. And yet another time, I have asked the Lord.

(HUMAN
SPECULATION)
GATHA
USHTAVAITI
YASNA 44

*“That I shall ask Thee, tell it me right, O Ahura !
Who was in the beginning the father and creator
of righteousness ?
Who created the path of the sun and stars ?
Who causes the moon to increase and wane but Thou?
This I wish (to know), O Mazda ! besides what
I know (already).*

*That I shall ask Thee, tell it me right, O Ahura!
Who is holding the earth and the skies above it?
Who made the waters and the trees of the field?
Who is in the winds and storms that they so quickly run ?
Who is the creator of the good-minded beings, O Mazda ?*

*That I shall ask Thee, tell it me right, O Ahura !
Who created the lights of good effect and the darkness?
Who created the sleep of good effect and the activity?
Who (created) morning, noon, and night,
reminding the priest always of his duties?. . . “*

“He has not replied to these yearnings of mine, as He well knows that these are best answered by us in our hearts.” Then raising his head and looking around, he again addressed the people:

(THE PROPHECY)
GATHA
USHTAVAITI
YASNA 45

*“I will proclaim the primeval (thought) of this life
which Ahuramazda, who knows it, spoke unto me;
for those of you who do not carry my word into
practice so as I think and speak it,
the end of the life will come.*

*I will proclaim the Best in this life. Mazda knows it in truth,
who created it as the father of the Good Mind who is
working (in the minds); its daughter is Devotion (Armaiti)
with good works.
The Lord (Ahura) who is giving all (good things) cannot
be deceived.*

*I will proclaim the word which the Most Beneficent
(the source of all prosperity) spoke to me, which is the
best for men to hear.
All those who give a hearing to this my word, will be free
from all defects and reach immortality.
Mazda is Lord through the instrumentality of the Good Mind.*

*I will proclaim, as the greatest of all things, that one
should be good, praising only righteousness.
Ahuramazda will hear those who are bent on furthering
(all that is good). May He whose goodness is communicated
by the Good Mind, instruct me in His best wisdom.
All that have been living, and will be living, subsist by
means of His bounty only. The soul of the righteous
attains to immortality, but that of the wicked man
has everlasting punishment.
Such is the rule of Ahuramazda, whose the creatures are.*

*Him whom I wish to extol with my praises I now behold
with (my) eye,
knowing Him to be Ahuramazda, the reality of the
Good Mind, deed and word. Let us thus set down our
gifts of praise in the dwelling-place of the heavenly
singers (angels).*

*Him I wish to adore with my Good Mind,
Him who gives us fortune and misfortune according to His will.
May Ahuramazda make our progeny (and)
cattle thrive, that of the master as well as that
of the servant, by producing in them the good qualities
of the Good Mind.*

*Him I wish to extol with the prayers of my devotion,
who calls Himself Ahuramazda, that is.
He knows with his true and Good Mind,
and gives to this world the freedom from defects and
immortality,*

*which are in His possession, as two permanently
active powers.....”*



THE BLESSING

“The Lord’s words spoken by me here are profound and I would further explain that at the dawn of creation, twin spirits, each different in thoughts, words and deeds came about. One is good, the other evil, but both are subject to the supreme authority of the Almighty who directs us to Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds, and tells us further that only in the service of mankind will we find truth and through Vohu Manu (Good Mind) find deep wisdom and through Armaiti (devotion and faith) the true path. With Vohu Manu (Good Mind) and love within our soul brings strength to serve our fellowmen. In turn, He promises us immortality and perfect eternal life. With these words, he gave a sign that the audience was over and he wished to be alone. Quietly the crowd dissolved, except for a few, an old man, his wife and a girl who was her daughter. Then the older woman spoke, “O ! Holy One, my daughter weds tomorrow, we beseech your blessings for her.”

Zarathushtra turned to the girl and in spite of being extremely tired, spoke his blessings thus:

GATHA
VAHISHAT-
OISHTI
YASNA 53

*“Unto maidens fit for marriage, / speak,
Pay heed to my nuptial song:
Be well-versed in the doctrines of your religion.
And the life of Good Mind shall be yours.
Do ye love each other in accordance
With the Law of Purity,
And your home life shall be happy.
Leave the bylanes of wickedness and
Take to the high roads of righteousness.
And it shall be, indeed, a great achievement.
Be faithful to your father and your husband.
Your kinsmen and the tillers of
The soil, the holiest of the holy;
And ye shall be worthy of the best abode.
By the grace of Ahura Mazda.”*

The Power of Ahunavar

The day had been long and he had never felt so weary before, as now. It was dusk as he rose to walk back to the village. He could not help admiring the beauty around him and, skirting the lake, he climbed onto a little ridge forming part of a hillock. He had not walked far, when he found himself slipping off the ridge and crashed into a ditch, hitting his head against the hard earth. The blow dazed him and even as he willed to rise, he felt ugly hands on him and the nauseating stench of the Devas as they dragged him off to a nearby cave.

From birth, his life had been threatened by these vile creatures and it now looked as if he was totally at their mercy. His arms seemed paralysed. There was a heavy pressure on his chest and ugly, horny fingers were at his throat, clawing to choke the life out of his body. His great will brought his mind under control and in the deep recesses of his mind, the mighty words of the Ahunavar began to take shape.

Yatha Ahu Vairiyo

*Yatha Ahu Vairiyo
Atha ratushi, ashatchit hacha,*

*Vangheushi dazda manangho,
Shyaotnannam angheushi Mazadai*

*Kshathremcha Ahurai a
Yim Dregubyo dadat vastarem.*

And he forgot the hands at his throat, the fear for his life, everything, only the roll of the powerful words of the mighty Ahunavar prayers filled his mind. An invisible force now seemed to gently envelope him in its protective fold.



POWER OF AHUNAVAR

The first thing that broke into his consciousness was the gentle nudging of something soft and warm; something cuddly and loving was licking his face. The next thing he realized was that he was breathing normally and the air around him seemed to be clean and fresh. His hands felt free. He moved them cautiously and found he was holding a little goat—a kid. He tried to rise, but he could not, so he just let the kid snuggle in his arms and continue its caress.

Moments later, he heard a shuffling sound. Then a loving voice was calling the little goat. A light shone and he saw the silhouette of an old woman. A while later, he was at the village before a warm fire, a cup of hot milk was pushed into his hands by his anxious and loving villagers. All night as he rested, an urgency filled him to reveal to his people one of the most important of the many revelations he had had with his Lord, and which this very night had saved his life.

The first Talisman
of the Lord..
The Ahunavar Prayer

At sunrise, he was seated at the village square with his people around him. The Sacred Fires burnt bright before him. The impatience in him could not be contained. “Listen, my people, listen well to my words,” he began in a weak voice. Then after a pause, he continued, “All of you well know what happened to me last night. If I am here today, it is due to the mercy of my Lord and His promise to help His people, whenever they are in trouble and danger. This He had revealed to me a long while ago and it is to my regret that I have not made this known to you earlier.” He took a deep breath, looked into the distance and reminiscing, said, “The clouds were thick that day as I sat before my Sacred Fires on the mighty Elbruz and talked to my Lord. I asked the Lord:

YASNA 19

“O Ahuramazda! most munificent spirit, creator of the settlements supplied with creatures, righteous one! Which was the word. O Ahuramazda ! that thou spakest unto me (which was) before the heavens, before the water, before the earth, before the animals, before the trees, before the fire, son of Ahuramazda, before the righteous man, before the demons and savage men (cannibals), before the whole material world, before all good things created by Mazda, that are of rightful origin ?

Then said Ahuramazda: This was the part of the Ahuna-vairya, O Spitama Zarathushtra ! which I spake unto thee, (which was) before the heavens, before the water, before the earth, before the animals, before the trees, before the fire, son of Ahuramazda, before the righteous man, before the demons and savage men (cannibals), before the whole material world, before all good things created by Mazda, that are of rightful origin ?

These my parts of the Ahuna-vairya, when recited without mistake (and) without mispronunciation, are equal O Spitama Zarathushtra! to a hundred of the other principal stanzas (Gathas), recited without mistake (and) without mispronunciation. Even recited with mistakes (and) mispronunciation (they are) equal to ten other principals

And whoever, in this my world supplied with creatures, O Spitama Zarathushtra ! shall recall (mentally) one part of the Ahuna-vairya, or in the course of recalling shall mutter it, or in the course of muttering shall chant it, or in the course of chanting, prays to it, his soul will I, who am Ahuramazda, carry all three times over the bridge to paradise.”

Then said Zarathushtra, “From these revelations, you my people must know that the words of the Ahunavar prayers are your talisman in all your difficulties— when you despair and the entire world seems lost to you, then turn to the Lord and repeat this powerful prayer. It is the mightiest, it is the holiest, it is the most ancient of our prayers. It was created before the world by God Almighty and with its help He created the universe.” “No matter where you are, no matter how great your enemy, no matter how great the crisis, repeat these prayers or even the first word alone, sincerely and with all your heart, and you will have the full might of our great God Ahuramazda behind you.

“In spite of this, there will be moments of great trouble when you will feel you have done everything and yet all is lost and you can do no more than surrender to your fate. It is at moments like these that you are to remember to hold fast to your faith, for this is the greatest test of your faith itself. Gather what little strength remains and with ‘Yatha’ on your lips and the firm belief that God is with you, make once again your final effort to surmount your problems and lo! you will see you are over the top in the bright sunlight with the dark night behind you and your troubles are over.

“All that I have said so far regarding the Ahuna-vairya and my talk with the Lord on this word and the prayer is to bring to your knowledge that our Lord has promised to come to the help of those who will call upon him through this prayer for help in their troubles and tribulations. I would now like to go on and reveal to you the rest of what was spoken by the Lord on that day. Listen to the Lord:

And I spake for myself this saying, about the heavenly Lord (ahu), and earthly master (ratu), before the creation of the heavens, before the water, before the earth, before the trees, before the creation of the four-footed animals, before the birth of the righteous biped man, before the sun-composed matter for the creation of the archangels (Ameshaspentas).

The more beneficent of my two Spirits has produced, by speaking it, the whole rightful creation, which is, and was, and will be, through the operation of the actions of life towards Mazda.

And this is the highest saying of those sayings which I have spoken, and do speak and (which) are to be spoken; for the nature of this saying is such that if the whole material world had learned it, being preserved by reciting it, it would escape liability to destruction....

And this saying, uttered by Mazda, has three verses (lines), the four classes, the five chiefs, (and) a conclusion with liberality. How (arose) its verses? Through the words humatem (Good Thoughts), hukhtem (Good Words), hvarshtem. (Good Deeds).

YATHA AHU VAIRYO

THE AHUNAVAR PRAYER

The heart and the core of the Ahunavar or the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer is Spitama Zarathushtra, for his life is the living expression of this prayer, which centers around eternal truth, love and service to mankind. Zarathushtra personified righteousness and lived only as the Lord required and that is for the uplift and welfare of God's creation. Therefore it is possible God may have had him in mind when He wove the words of this ancient prayer.

The above becomes all the more clear when one looks at the fact that when none could think of a strong one, a possible saviour for His (God's) creation, the Lord Ahuramazda, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, the Spiritual and Temporal Lord, that is the original Ahu and Ratu, had him already clearly in mind, "One such well known to me is Zarathushtra Spitama" (See page 23. Gatha Ahunavaiti Yasna 29) as if to imply a certain closeness with Zarathushtra

Further, Mother Earth in closing says, "O Mazda we all accept him for our Guide and Lord, Thy Noblest Son," and it was with this prayer on His lips that He sent down Zarathushtra as our Saviour and His trustee on earth

Taking this line of thought further, we look again at the three sets of meaning in the 'Yatha'.

1. A righteous man (Ahu) is the equal of a King (Ratu) who is God's anointed, which brings us to the thought, only in One is both (Spiritual & Temporal) embodied, and that is in . . . God—the Lord Ahuramazda
2. God's bounty will surely be his, who is wholly righteous and spends his life helping the weak and the meek, in other words, who lives for God.
3. The highest reward for service to mankind will be the strength or power granted to you for still greater service.

These are God's Truth and repeating them, is to show belief in His Truth. Therefore, calling out the prayer, 'Yatha' could well imply:

"O God, my Lord Ahuramazda. I fervently believe in You and will faithfully honour the truth proclaimed by You my God"

Can you wonder then, if God's strength is behind those who faithfully and fervently express this most powerful and ancient prayer, or even the one word 'Yatha'. Nothing can draw God's love and protection more than one's faith and fervent belief in Him.

In the eyes of the Lord, the righteous man is the equal of a King and so is God's representative on Earth.

The one who guides and helps others on to the path of righteousness will receive the Lord's bounty, (Vohu Manu).

His very love and strength goes to those who succour the poor and the weak—the meek and the lowly.

A selfish and greedy man denies himself God's grace and shuts himself into oblivion and unhappiness.

If you wish to be happy, then do not fail to see that others around you are happy.

Share your knowledge and your art with others and the world will be a better place to live in.

*What is “Good Thoughts”? The righteous original Mind.
What is “Good Words”? The munificent Word.
What is “Good Deeds”? (That done) by the praising
creatures, first in righteousness. ...”*

The Lord again tells us of the power of the word Ahunvar and states that if we heed His message and live out our lives as is shown in the Ahuna-vairya prayer, we will be assured of eternal bliss in heaven. He then places before us the triad of eternal truth — Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds which are the fundamental principles of our morality. Live by them and you will never lose your way to everlasting happiness.

“Literally the translation of Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer runs like this:

*As Lord's Temporal work their will on Earth,
So by their gathered ASHOI Teachers WISE
The gifts of VOHU-MAN come as reward
For deeds done out of LOVE for Lord of Life;
Ahura's XSHATHRA surely cometh down
On him who SERVES with zeal his brothers meek.*

“It is meant to show that the spiritual teacher is as great as the sovereign of his land and deserves our veneration due to his having observed the law of Ashoi all his life, which clearly signifies that the will of the Lord is the Law of Ashoi (Righteousness), the riches of Vohu-manu (Good Mind) shall be given to him who works this world of Mazda and wields according to the will of Ahura the power He gave to him to relieve the helpless. Which in still simpler words means that the truly great and loved ones in the eyes of the Lord are the ones who observe the law of Ashoi and are spending their life helping the weak and the lowly.

“Those are the ones who guide and help others along its path, for the Lord's gift of Vohu-manu (Good Mind) is granted to those who serve His cause and purpose in this life. His very love and strength goes to those who help the poor and the weak, the meek and the lowly.

“For those of you who hear me now, it is well to remember that if you wish to be happy, then do not fail to see that those who are around you are happy. After all, if you are possessed of wealth, money by itself will only corrupt you and become your master; but if you disperse its strength around you, creating happiness in others, whose lot is not as fortunate as yours, God's bounty will surely await you.

“For, in this reckoning, we are only trustees of what we possess and should be willing to share our gift with others. A selfish and greedy man denies to himself God's grace and shuts himself into oblivion and unhappiness.

“Share your knowledge and your art with others and the world will be a better place to live in. For the greatest wealth you can possess are the smiling faces you can have around you, for wealth is only a sense of well-being and is all the more enhanced through participation by many.

“In this world of joy and sorrow, if man will not show man sympathy, kindness and affection, life's heavy burden can become unbearable. Only when aided by those more fortunate, and by living in fellowship with one another, sharing the other's burden, can its crushing weight be relieved.

“You should understand that life is incomplete when man lives for himself alone, oblivious of the happiness of others. Life is best only when lived with and for others; one should seek happiness in the happiness of all.

“He is not rich who is not rich in righteousness. He is not great who is not great in righteousness; for greatness alone has but a short life and riches can be lost the next day. It is righteousness alone that lives for ever.

“Do not mistake customs and rituals for religion. Rituals help our spiritual development and are the accompaniments of religion, but not religion itself. Religion is righteousness.

“Further, with the blessings that you acquire from God for all such deeds when done without fear or for favour, comes from Him a certain unseen strength or dynamism and with each such deed, you become the beneficiary of a multiplying strength, which helps you to perform more acts of similar nature.

“Finally, a man or woman who is inspired by the Good Mind (Vohu-Manu), whose actions are guided by truth, who works with loving care for the welfare of God's creation, who strives to make the world progress towards perfection, will certainly be blessed by God with the twin blessings of a perfect and happy life and immortality ever afterwards in the fair abode of the Great Lord.”

The day passed smoothly and it was spent in resting. Anxious eyes were on Zarathushtra all day, and no moment passed without someone or other anticipating his needs and rushing to carry out some act of kindness for him. The love of the people touched him deeply. Towards evening, the quiet was broken by a clatter of hoofbeats and two horsemen appeared in a cloud of dust. One seemed badly hurt and was bleeding profusely. Even as his companion alighted from his steed to help him, the man slumped to the ground.

Maidyoi, a disciple, and the other horseman helped the wounded man into a house and carefully laid him on a bed. As his wounds were being attended to, the other horseman announced that they were King Vishtaspa's messengers, and on the way they had been attacked by enemies. So saying, he handed over to Zarathushtra a letter from the King. The message reminded him that Asfandiyar, the King's son was to visit different lands to spread the word of Zarathushtra's religion. While copies of the Gathas were being made for the priest of the land, a scroll was to be prepared defining the essence of his new religion, so that the common man could find it easy to understand, accept and follow.

The other half of the letter mentioned the Turanian King Arjasp's displeasure at the spread of the Zoroastrian faith all over Iran and urged Zarathushtra to return to court. There was no time to reply to the King's message, as the thought of the wounded soldier whose condition was so near death, was uppermost in Zarathushtra's mind.

At dawn Maidyoi awoke Zarathushtra, for the soldier was dying. They approached the man, found him unconscious, but breathing heavily. He seemed to be on his last breath. Zarathushtra leant over and placing his mouth to the man's ear, chanted in a loud whisper:

Ashem Vohu

*Ashem Vohu vahishtem asti
Ushta asti ushta ahmai
Hyat Ashai vahishtai Ashem*

**The second
Talisman of the
Lord . . . Ashem Vohu**

He paused, then whispered it again. Then, as he began the prayer for the third time, somewhere in the soldier's consciousness the echoing words of this soothing prayer brought a response, for his last dying gasp of painful breath brought forth the words, "Ashem Vohu " When they laid him out for the last rites, there was a serene look on the dead man's face.

The elders who saw Zarathushtra with the soldier in his last moments, were intrigued and later at a time of leisure asked for an explanation. Their interest gratified him, as it revealed their desire to learn from his deeds. Praising them, he put his hand on the oldest man and led them all to the shade of a large tree, for the afternoon heat was great.

"The prayer, Ashem Vohu is in praise of righteousness and wishing to know how this prayer stood in the mind of our Lord, I asked Him about it.

HADOKHTO *"O Ahuramazda! most munificent spirit, creator*
NASK *of the settlements supplied with creatures, righteous one!*
YASNA 21 *in whom alone is Thy word, the enunciation of all*
 good, of all that is of rightful origin !

Ahuramazda answered me: In the Ashem-reciter,
O Zarathushtra !

O Gracious Lord!
What is the one recital of the Ashem which is worth
a thousand of the other recitals of the Ashem in
greatness and goodness and excellence ?

Ahuramazda answered me. That, indeed, O righteous
Zarathushtra!
which a man recites as the Ashem,
starting up from sleep and going to sleep again,
praising good thoughts and good words and good
deeds, renouncing evil thoughts, and evil words
and evil deeds.

O Gracious Lord!
What is the one recital of the Ashem which is worth
the whole region of Qaniratha, with cattle and with
wealth in humankind, in greatness and goodness
and excellence?

Ahuramazda answered me: That, indeed, O righteous
Zarathushtra! which a man recites as the Ashem
at the extreme end of life, praising good thoughts
and good words and good deeds, renouncing all
evil thoughts and evil words and evil deeds. . . "

"The Ashem Vohu prayer brings to us, in short, the great blessings of Ashoi (righteousness) which is not only good, but is the highest blessing our Lord has bestowed on man. For the prayer itself tells us that righteousness is man's best acquisition. It is happiness, when he is righteous for the sake of righteousness. In other words, wealth can give one only temporary happiness, but righteousness is a permanent acquisition and goes to the other world with you as your most precious asset. It is the only true path to God.

"The supreme bliss which lies in Ashoi, comes to those who practise it for its own sake, for the pure love of it without thought of fear or favour. For as you must know, our Lord is the supreme Ashoi and appears at the head of all His creation. It is the changeless eternal law of God and obeying this, we can progress towards our destined fulfilment."

"From this, one can see the power of the Ashem Vohu prayer, as it is built around one of the most important tenets of our religion and so should be said when one goes to sleep and on awakening, to protect us at night from harm and to see us through our working day. Above all, it would be of the highest value, if we could say these prayers with our last breath, even as we leave this world. For thus we prove that we have expressed our faith in our Lord and in His teachings of the good life."

As Zarathushtra spoke, he saw a young boy blow into the fire which cooked their afternoon meal. He went forward swiftly, put his hand gently over the boy's mouth and then led him back to the group of men who were seated in the shade hearing their Prophet speak. Looking into the boy's face, Zarathushtra laughed and told him, "Now Cyrus, blow into my face." The boy hesitated and looked doubtful. Then Zarathushtra turned him by his shoulders towards his father and repeated, "Blow into your father's face." The boy Cyrus was greatly troubled and shook his head, refusing to do so. For it had been the law of the clan that the young should honour their parents, their teachers and all the elders. He was now being asked to make a serious breach in his deepest beliefs. He was bewildered and confused. Then Zarathushtra, putting out his foot, commanded the boy, "Now stamp on my foot, go on Cyrus, I want you to stamp my foot; hurry!" Now the boy was sure Zarathushtra had gone mad, and with a cry forced himself out of his grip and rushed into the shelter of his father's arms. The onlookers were amused and puzzled and more people began to collect.

Zarathushtra approached the boy, ruffled his hair and spoke to him with a smile in his voice, "You know, Cyrus, you are a fine boy, your parents have brought you up very well and they should be proud of you." Now Cyrus began to understand that he had done right and that Zarathushtra was only testing him. The crowd was pleased and applauded father and son. But Zarathushtra raised his hand and said, "Softly, not so fast." Then, leading the boy by the hand towards the fire, he said, "The fire is a bounty given to us by the Lord. It cooks your daily food, it lights up the darkness, it drives away dangerous animals and evil things. Through it, the Lord Ahuramazda has spoken to me about our great faith. Therefore, to us Zoroastrians, fire is our God's symbol.

"See, you are a fine boy, you would not under any circumstances blow into your father's face, as you thought it wrong. Then don't you see that it is wrong to blow into something which is the Lord's bounty? Will it be nice to spray your spittle and germs on to this fire?"

Understanding dawned on Cyrus and he fervently shook his head. Zarathushtra pulled out a flaming piece of wood, threw it on the ground and walking away, remarked casually, "Cyrus, stamp out that fire." The boy rushed forward and raised his foot to stamp out the fire. Suddenly he stopped. He had realised it was a great wrong to place his foot on the fire and stamp it out. Instead, he bent down scooped out the earth and, throwing it over the flame, put out the fire. Zarathushtra whirled around, caught him lovingly in his arms and hugged him closely. Cyrus felt elated. A joyous understanding entered his soul which made him regard with newborn respect, fire, water and the other elements of nature which he had all his young life taken for granted.

Now, holding Cyrus, Zarathushtra faced the men and spoke to all around him: "God has given us the fire, the air, the water and the earth, free for our use. They are the most precious assets in our life. We may use them, but we should not abuse them. The Lord Ahuramazda has told me often that we must honour all the elements He has placed at our command and at no time defile and pollute them. If we do so, in time Nature will wreak its revenge and life will become unbearable on this earth."

AFTER DEATH

AT DAWN ON THE FOURTH DAY

"It is all in the soul said Zarathushtra. "Our Hell and Heaven"
there is no flaming hell;
external punishment of the soul is no punishment, it is only cruelty,
just as an external reward is no reward.

This soldier's death made Zarathushtra feel that the people should know more about what takes place after death; so that it could help them to live a more righteous life. That evening, as the elders sat around him, Zarathushtra began his discourse. "I have in the past spoken about the many revelations I have had with our God and you all have benefited from them. Today, in the midst of death, I feel it appropriate that you should learn more about your soul and what happens to it after death, I shall use the Lord's words, as none other can describe to you in full measure as He knows all. I asked my Gracious Lord :

HADOKHTO NASK
YASNA 22

"O Ahuramazda! most munificent spirit, creator of the settlements supplied with creatures, righteous one! when a righteous man passes away, where dwells his soul that night?"

Then said Ahuramazda: It sits down in the vicinity of the head, chanting the Gatha Ushtavaiti, imploring blessedness (thus): Blessed is he blessed is everyone to whom Ahuramazda. ruling by his own will shall grant (the two everlasting powers).

That night the soul experiences as much of pleasure as all that which (it had) as a-living existence (i.e. when living in this world)". And so the soul sits there for the. second and third night also doing the same thing.

"On the dawn of the fourth day after death, the soul of the righteous person makes its triumphal ascent to heaven. A sweet-scented wind, sweeter by far than any which the soul ever inhaled on earth, gently flaps its wings in its face and wafts perfume all around

"There appears then to the soul its own Daena, in the shape of a damsel of unsurpassed beauty, the fairest of the fair in the world, the like of which the soul had neither seen nor heard, in the material world It is the impersonation of the soul's own good thoughts, good words, and good deeds in life, the true reflection of its character. Thus does the soul of the righteous person advance to the realms of beatitude.

"On a dreadful and dreary path, on the other hand, marches the soul of the wicked one, led by its Daena. "Through the bitter, biting and foul-scented wind, blowing from the northern regions, the unfortunate soul now passes. As the personification of its evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds, its Daena now appears before it, in the shape of an ugly old woman. Mercilessly, it taunts the soul for its wicked life and delivers it to the world of darkness.

"Thus the deeds of each man in this life moulds his soul. The soul of the non-righteous man deteriorates and becomes a hideous replica of bad thoughts, words and deeds, whereas the soul of a righteous man goes into a state of grace and pristine glory. For one there is a mental hell and for the other a mental bliss, all in their very own soul."

The third Talisman
of the Lord
... Yenghe Hatam

Zarathushtra's face now darkened with sorrow, for he had to announce his departure, and, with a catch in his voice, he began, "Tomorrow, I will have to leave for King Vishtaspa's court, and I do so with a heavy heart. But I am also happy as I know all of you have understood my deeds and preserved them in your hearts as examples to be followed in your life. This is good, but there will be many other righteous men you will meet and hear of in your life. These men also must be honoured and placed before yourselves as examples to follow.

"With the Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Ashem Vohu prayers, you are told what is best in your lives, and with the Yenghe Hatam you are told it is necessary for you to emulate righteous men. With these three most sacred prayers, your path to God will be clear. Here now are the words of the Yenghe Hatam:



Yenghe hatam

*Yenghe hatam aat yesne paiti vangho
Mazdao Ahuro vaetha Ashat hacha
Yaonghamcha tascha taoscha yazamaide*

For translation see page (17)

"The world has always revered noble men; the brilliance and strength of such men, and the traditions laid down by them, live through the ages as a beacon of light to mankind. In the Yenghe Hatam, the Lord points to such people and tells you that if you ally yourselves with such men, your association, veneration or even thoughts about them will induce similar qualities within you. If you read about the lives of noble men and reflect upon their good deeds, it must affect your way of thinking and create in you an urge to do good also; just as even good companions help to mould your character aright.

Your Urvan (soul)
and the Fravashi
(guardian angel,
spiritual force)

"Before I leave, I must speak to you of one last truth which is of great importance: the Lord has from His Divine Self, shed holy forces and to each such Divine Spark has entrusted the care of each one of us. These are called Fravashis. They render inner spiritual guidance when invoked by your soul and from the very beginning the soul is helped by the Fravashi from within, in its spiritual evolution towards final salvation and God's aim. The Fravashi never interferes in the affairs of man, but acts as an invisible and a silent guide.

"Within each one of us is an inner voice, a voice which in an evil person is weak and in a righteous man strong. But in all of us, there is this inner voice which tries to tell us what is wrong and what is right. This is the voice of our Daena (conscience) a part of our Urvan (soul). The very name Urvan signifies The Chooser,' the one who is free to choose as his will dictates."

Then one from the crowd cried, "Why is the voice weak in an evil man? He needs the greater help." "Those are sound words," said Zarathushtra. "But remember our God does not believe in force, and so the choice to do good or evil rests with the man. When he insists on doing evil, the evil he does piles up dross in his ears and the voice then sounds weak to him. Let him perform even one good act and you will see that with each such act, dross is reduced and the voice becomes stronger.

THE LORD'S TALISMAN
YATHA AHU VAIRYO - ASHEM VOHU - YENGE HATEM

Spitama Zarathushtra

“It is apparent that most of you do not have an awareness of your Urvan. You do not realise that the Urvan is you and the body which holds it, is material and mortal. If you are asked to put your hand into a fire, you will pull back in terror. Yet, each day without a care you will act wilfully in Soul-destroying ways by lying, cheating, lusting and giving in to other evil ways. This is because you do not have an awareness of your Urvan.”

Then another listener cried, “What then is the Urvan (soul)?”

Then answered Zarathushtra, “It is your spiritual self—it is you. It is your most precious self. When the soul weeps, some of the most beautiful poems and songs are born. When you put your soul into a work of art—the world admires it. When you are wilful—it is your soul that is being irresponsible. Your body is the material object of this world, which serves as a casket for your soul. The Fravashi is an element of God within you to serve as an ideal which your soul must endeavour to emulate. It shows you the heights it can aspire to and be one with God. The Fravashi is your pilot through life, it not only guides you, but is God's shining self placed before you to know what you have to attain and see for yourself that it is worth the effort.”

Concluding he said, “You do not realise the importance of your soul and most of us take our souls for granted till it is too late. It is like a man who has a very loving and faithful wife and during her lifetime he takes her for granted and never realises how precious she is. When she dies and is lost for all time, then it dawns on the husband how great is the loss and how precious was the wife to him. Likewise, the soul is the most precious thing a man possesses and the sooner you realise how valuable it is, the better it will be for your future happiness.”

“In like manner, God has sent out such ‘spiritual forces’ into the world to look after the well-being and tend to the growth of all animate and inanimate objects. Everything you see around you in this world has its own Fravashi, Let me repeat the Lord's words, and you will understand better

FRAVARDIN
YASHT

“O Zarathushtra: To thee alone I shall tell the power and strength, glory, usefulness, and happiness of the holy Guardian-angels, the strong and victorious, O righteous Spitama Zarathushtra ! how they come to help me (Zend), how they give me assistance. By means of their splendour and glory I uphold the sky which is shining so beautifully, and which touches and surrounds this earth; it resembles a bird which is ordered by your God to stand still there; it is high as a tree, widestretched, iron-bodied, having its own light in the three worlds (thrishva); on which (the sky) Ahuramazda, together with Mithra, Rashnu, and Spenta Armaiti, puts a garment decked with stars, and made by your God in such a way that nobody can see the ends of its parts. . . .

By means of their splendour and glory, I keep, O Zarathushtra! the embryos alive in the pregnant females, to be formed out of a formless inanimate mass, to obtain a living soul, bones, form, consistency, growth of the faculty of walking and speaking. . . .

By means of their splendour and glory, the waters flow straight forward in inexhaustible sources; by means of their splendour and glory, trees grow out of the earth; by means of their splendour and glory, the winds blow, carrying with them vapours from inexhaustible sources.”

“From the mighty words of our Great God you can see how skilfully the universe and all that is within, is so well ruled. This then is the tremendous force, that sees to the orderliness and regularity of natural phenomena. It is the All- Powerful Intelligence which has fashioned the universe and regulates it and in the final substance is our Lord Ahuramazda: and with these words, I leave you my love and my blessings. May the Lord be with you always.”

Ten days elapsed after days of preparation and fatiguing travel. Zarathushtra and his disciples were well on their way to the capital. Each morning he was up at dawn and was with his God, and always the King's message was on his mind. When Zarathushtra entered the court of Vishtaspa, he was met with great affection and honour. Asfandyar and the highest nobles of the land thronged to welcome him. He felt greatly honoured and wondered if his long absence was the cause of the special welcome he had experienced this morning. But King Vishtaspa had definite reasons of his own. This could be seen in the fuming faces of the Turanian envoy and the courtiers of King Arjasp who had been left to cool their heels for almost a week before they could see King Vishtaspa.

The Turanians had only this day been called to court and expected to place before Vish-taspa what they believed to be a message of the highest importance from their King. Instead of being called as soon as the court convened, they saw their case being set aside to honour and welcome Zarathushtra.

When all was quiet and the King and Zarathushtra were seated, the Turanians again made a move to address the King, who pretended not to see them. He rose, calling his son Asfandyar to his side, and addressed Zarathushtra, “We have decided to send our loving son, Asfandyar to lands far and near to help people understand and accept our new religion of the One God. We have in the past discussed the need to compress the essence of our holy religion in clear, short directives, so that the common man can better understand and follow the faith of our Lord Ahuramazda I hope, dear Zarathushtra, you have this ready now.”

Zarathushtra turned to his disciples and nodded his head and Maidyoi bowed low to the King and placed before him a manuscript freshly written. Vishtaspa and Asfandyar were delighted and, scroll in hand, the King walked up to Zarathushtra. Returning the scroll to him he said, “Come, Zarathushtra, honour us and the country by reading out our holy directives.”

Zarathushtra bowed and, as he moved forward, spread the scroll open with his two hands. The smell of its imprint were fresh on the manuscript. Facing the King and the court he began, “If the King will kindly permit me, what I hold in my hands I would fain wish to call a list of directives. For the Lord has said, ‘Thou wilt do good for the sake of good and for the love of Me. He has not commanded, Thou shall do good.’ To me, they are ‘A Charter of Faith’. So, if all agree, I would like to call it thus.” Everyone spontaneously hailed his words. Then Zarathushtra continued, “For me the first article of faith is the three eternal truths made known to me by my God. I have therefore caused the scroll to be so inscribed.”

The Charter of Faith

THE DESCENT OF THE FRAVASHIS

THE ONE BECOMES THE MANY

In response to the Great God's desire to save His creation and mankind's destruction from evil, elements or sparks from His Being ride down from the high heavens and take their post in mortal bodies, in animate and inanimate objects in their quest for their fight against evil for evil represents destruction. These are called Fravashis.

They guide human beings through life on to the path of righteousness and they tend and promote the well being of the entire creation.

This then is the tremendous force, the all powerful intelligence which has fashioned the Universe and regulates the natural phenomena - the sun rises - the stars shine - the entire heavens stand in place- the rivers flow the seed sprouts and grows into plants and trees, and creation evolves and progresses all with the care of their Fravashis. In the final analysis, the Fravashis or Farohars collectively are the Lord Ahuramazada, just like little flames when put together make one great fire. Thus the one becomes the many and the Universe is his outer form as also His Kingdom. This also explains how the Lord is immanent in all things, that is, He is everywhere and in all things. He is Omnipresent.

The illustration is a complex, multi-layered circular composition set against a solid yellow background. At the top left, a massive, billowing cloud of orange and red flames rises from a grey, angular base. From this cloud, a multitude of small, golden-yellow birds fly towards the center. In the upper right, three larger, more detailed birds with reddish-orange wings are shown in flight. The main body of the illustration is a large circle. Inside this circle, at the bottom, is a blue wavy band representing water, with several small yellow fish swimming in it. Above the water, a large, stylized flame or leaf shape dominates the center. This shape is divided into several sections, each containing different imagery: a bright sun with rays, a crescent moon, a tree, a person working, a couple embracing, a child playing, and various other figures and symbols. To the left of the flame, there's a depiction of a city with tall buildings and a winding road. To the right, there's a landscape with palm trees, a river, and a dam. The entire scene is framed by a white border, which is itself set within a larger yellow frame. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century religious art or propaganda posters, with bold colors and clear, symbolic imagery.

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The illustration is a complex, multi-layered circular composition. At the center is a large, stylized flame or leaf-like shape, outlined in red and yellow. This central shape is divided into several sections, each containing different scenes: a sun rising over clouds, a person working at a desk, a couple embracing, a child playing, a woman holding a baby, and a group of people gathered around a table. Above the central shape, a crescent moon and several small blue stars are visible against a dark night sky. Below the central shape, a large, ornate bird, possibly a phoenix or a similar mythical creature, is depicted with its wings spread wide. The entire central scene is set within a circular frame. Outside this frame, the background is a bright yellow. To the left, there's a large, fiery orange and red cloud-like shape. To the right, there's a depiction of a cityscape with tall buildings and a river. Further right, there's a forest scene with trees and animals like cows and elephants. The overall theme is one of creation, life, and the interconnectedness of all things.

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A CHARTER OF FAITH

The first article of faith is

THOU WILT HONOUR AND FOLLOW THE THREE ETERNAL TRUTHS.
'MANASNI — GAVASNI — KUNUSNI'.

The second article of faith is

THOU WILT HONOUR AND FOLLOW THE DOCTRINE OF ASHOI, BY
LIVING A GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS LIFE, REMEMBERING ALWAYS,
THAT GOOD IS BEST SERVED, WHEN SERVING A FELLOW HUMAN
BEING.

The third article of faith is

THOU WILT HONOUR THY WORD AND IT SHALL BE AS A BOND UNTO
THEE. FORSWEARING THE LIE, FIGHTING FOR GOOD AND DESTROYING
EVIL WILL BE THY LIFE'S ENDEAVOUR, FOR THE GOOD THOU WILT
DO IN THIS LIFE WILL BE REWARDED IN THE ONE TO COME, AS
SURELY AS EVIL WILL BE PUNISHED, TILL THE DAY OF THE FINAL
RESURRECTION AND REDEMPTION FOR ALL SOULS.

The fourth article of faith is

THOU WILT HONOUR VIRTUE, FOR AT THE TIME OF THE FINAL
JUDGEMENT, VIRTUE WILL BE ITS OWN REWARD AND VICE ITS OWN
PUNISHMENT. KNOW FURTHER THAT THE HIGHEST VIRTUE IS VIRTUE
FOR THE SAKE OF VIRTUE ALONE.

The fifth article of faith is

THOU WILT HONOUR CHARITY AND JUSTICE, AND REGARD AS VICE
CRUELTY AND SLOTH.

The sixth article of faith is

THOU WILT HONOUR THE HOLY FIRE AND ALL OTHER ELEMENTS
CREATED BY GOD BY NOT DEFILING THEM WITH POLLUTED MATTER.

The last article of faith is

THOU WILT HONOUR THE COVENANT MADE WITH THE LORD AT THY
NAVJOTE AND FOR ALL TIMES KEEP FAITH WITH HIM.

THESE SHALL BE THE TRUTHS PREVAILING RIGHT UNTO THE END OF TIME.

"Here I would direct all men and women who come to accept our faith, or the father and mother who bring their child for the Navjote, to understand and explain the fullness of the action they or the child is about to take. The Navjote, as the word implies, is a 'new life' you accept. You are purified as required by our customs and stand before the Holy Fires, the priest and others and declare, 'I believe in the One God—Lord Ahuramazda'. And with this acceptance the investiture begins. The priest adorns you with the Sudreh. Then the Kusti is placed in your hands and so begins your covenant with God. With the first knot of the Kusti you tie around your body, you promise to remember and observe my beliefs and teachings. With the second knot you promise to fight evil till the last days of your life. With the third knot, you promise to follow the path of Ashoi, and with the fourth and last knot, you promise to keep faith with the Lord Ahuramazda for all times." Zarathushtra bowed to the King, rolled up the scroll, handed it to Asfandiyar and moved back to his seat.

The Turanian Lords were by now in a great state of agitation. The insults heaped on them would normally have brought forth strong reaction, but now their native caution came to the fore and Vishtaspa, seeing them undecided, gave a sign for them to state their case. There was consternation and then their chief spoke: "Gracious King ! We have a message of great importance, but it is meant only for your ears and so we crave a private audience." Vishtaspa would now brook no delay and told them to state their errand here and now, or wait for some weeks; if he could find time free to see them alone, he would so inform them. At this, the envoy made as if to send over the written message of King Arjasp, but Vishtaspa would have none of it and insisted on the envoy reading the message aloud. He began, with faltering voice, by calling out the courtesy due to the King and continued.

THE
SHAHNAMA
OF FIRDAUSI

*"A friendly letter to thee now I send.
For thou a comrade art, as well as friend.
When this thou readest, wash thy head and feet,
Show not thy face to him (Zardusht) who brings deceit.
Off from thy loins do thou these bonds (Kusti) undo
And thus with sparkling wine thy joy renew.
Cast not the rites of thine own kings away.
Earth's noble ones that were before thy day.
If thou accept this counsel wise from me.
The Turkomans shall do no harm to thee.
Of Kashan, of Turan, of Chin, the land,
Just as Iran is, shall be in thy hand.
I give thee all the treasure without bound,
That I have gathered with much trouble round,
Silver and gold, and steeds of varied hue;
And ornaments with gems embedded too.
Then slaves on thee with wealth will I bestow,
All beauties from whose heads the locks hang low.
But this my counsel, should'st thou not accept,
In iron fetters shall thy feet be kept,
After this letter in a month or two,
Thy country will I ravish through and through;
I from Turan and Chin will bring hosts there,
Such that the ground their camp will never bear. ..."*

Satan tempts Vishtaspa



HOLD! MY NOBLE LORDS, HOLD!

The message at first had not been clearly heard and it permeated through the court slowly. For a moment there was a stunned silence, for those who heard could not believe their ears. Then pandemonium reigned, as lords and councillors raced to slaughter the cringing Turanians, now compressed to a tight knot in a corner of the protecting wall, with shouts of “Dog ! Offal ! Carrion ! Kill, kill !” filling the air. The first to reach their side was Asfandiyar, who with one violent leap was face to face with the envoy. Then, with one sweep of his bull-headed mace, he knocked the offending scroll from the trembling Turanian’s hands and, with another sweep of his arms, would have surely crushed the brains of this arrogant creature, who had come to insult Zarathushtra in his father’s court. But, above the thunder and tumult, a clear command like a clarion call came cleaving through.

“Hold! My noble lords, hold!” The Turanian lord dropped to the floor in a sweating faint from relief and the valiant Asfandiyar and the whole court froze in their tracks. The words belonged to Zarathushtra, the Holy One. Vishtaspa had intended that the Turanian should die and, not moving a finger, had watched his handiwork with a mocking smile. Zarathushtra seemed to tower over the court as he walked up to Asfandiyar and the nobles and, with the help of Jamasp, drew them back. Then, surveying the disordered court and the demoralised Turanian, he said, “These men have spoken terrible words against our religion, but they are

envoys, and the dignity of our court and the tradition that protects them must be honoured and not sullied by the blood of these craven creatures. Ahuramazda in His time will mete out justice to Arjasp, the sorcerer. For now, sire, send these vile men out of our kingdom with a fitting reply.” He bowed and, with the King’s permission, left the court.

With scorn in his voice, King Vishtaspa whipped the shattered Turanians with his words, “You vermin, followers of this sorcerer Arjasp, get you gone, out of my sight and my country, and know that it is by the greatness of the man whom you came to defile and by the generosity of our religion, that you live today. Further tell your presumptuous magician Arjasp, that, but for Zarathushtra, we would have stuffed his message into the mouth of his messengers and sent their roasted bodies back to him, as our answer. Tell him also that within the month, a Zoroastrian army will be knocking at his threshold and will raze to the very ground all you blasphemers that come before us. Take heed, we are men who keep our word. It’s the first teaching of our Lord, Go! Leave this very moment.”

Turning to his brother, General Zarir, Vishtaspa stormed, “Get some, of your good men and see that these vermin are thrown out of our country at once.”

The first religious war

War, that ugly word, was in the mouths of all. It was now imminent. Trumpets sounded in the plains and on the hills, armies seemed to take shape everywhere, Couriers and messengers rode all over the country calling lords and chiefs to arms. Machines of war, arms and every conceivable means of killing man were being amassed. What looked at first like a melee of armed men became an ocean of bobbing heads on elephants, camels and horses and vast multitudes on foot, stretching endlessly to the distant horizon.

King Vishtaspa was to lead the army in person with divisions under General Zarir and other lords, including Naozar, Girami, Shidasp and Ardeshir. Asfandiyar was reckoned too young to head a division and so rode with his uncle Zarir. On the other side, Arjasp made preparations for war. With the help of Chin and Kushan, he raised an army of 300,000 men under the leadership of an old Turkish ruffian called Gurgsar and two Devas called Kahram and Andiraman. The advance guard was headed by Kashas and the rear by Hushdiv. At the border of Iran and Turan, these two great hosts met and there ensued a great battle. The air was full of exultant shouts, the cries of dying men, the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses in agony and the clash of arms; of sword on shield and mace on armoured head, hissing, slicing sounds of arms and heads being severed by the swish of swords, the gasping and groaning of men as spears were thrust into their bodies. Soon, the hills and valleys were covered with dying men and writhing animals. Blood now flowed freely down the slopes to form little red lakes in the valley.

A terrible sight which no man would like to see in his lifetime, such was the gory battle between Vishtaspa, follower of God, and Arjasp, follower of the demon.

A religious creed had so possessed men’s souls, that for the first time in history, men from all stations in life were prepared to offer up their very lives as sacrifice for the protection and continuance of this creed.

There would be other times, later, when other men, of other races, in other countries, for other religions, would be prepared to do the same. But that was to come many, many thousands of years later. It would seem that Zoroastrians were the first to give their lives for their God Ahuramazda.

Asfandiyar to the rescue

In this battle royal, many illustrious lives were lost for the Zoroastrian religion. The noble Zarir, brother of the King, together with Vishtaspa’s son Shidasp, Jamasp’s son Girami, Ardeshir and a whole host of other nobles paid with their lives. The battle veered between victory and defeat and Iranian losses seemed to mount, when he who was said to be too young even to lead a division, came to the fore and tipped the scales of war.

THE SHAHNAMAH OF FIRDAUSI

“The faces of the heroes all turn pale,
The hearts of heroes tremble all and fail. . .
The bright Asfandiyar shall then appear,
The army in support, with God him near. . .
He then shall seize upon his iron mace,
And cause his glory forth to shine in grace.
The King victorious, destroyed his foe...”

And so Arjasp and his army fled into the desert waste. The Turkomans seeing this approached Asfandiyar on foot, throwing down their weapons and pleading for respite. They offered to worship Ahuramazda, set up fire temples and adopt the new religion, but the now senseless slaughter continued till Vishtaspa hearing their piteous cries, personally intervened.

The King and army lamented the loss of Zarir and other nobles. Zarathushtra set up a great state funeral for the glorious dead. Thirty thousand Iranians were killed and 1166 men of noble birth lost their lives, while a hundred thousand of the enemy perished with 800 chiefs.

The spread of the Zoroastrian faith

Vishtaspa returned to Bactria and gave Nastur the son of Zarir, command of the army. Asfandiyar was sent to different provinces like Rum and Barbar to spread the faith. To priests he gave copies of the Gathas and explained in detail the beliefs proclaimed by Zarathushtra but he was happiest when talking with the people and succeeded first in winning their hearts. A man of honour, he was also being increasingly acclaimed as a great hero of Iran, and so the people accepted readily much of what he said, because of their great love for him.

Asfandiyar’s own love and respect for the Holy One were unlimited, so his words were filled with great passion and eloquence: “The faith that the Holy One, Zarathushtra brings to us is a positive religion. He tells us that we are masters of our own destiny and that our own thoughts, words and deeds determine our reward or punishment in the life to come. He wants us to live our lives well here and now, leading a moderate but full life, always considering the welfare of those around us; in this way, we are assured of the future joy and happiness of our souls.

“He does not tell us to avoid evil. He tells us to fight evil. He tells us to entertain only good thoughts, for they will result in good words and good deeds, and with these will come God’s many bounties. He tells us that the highest point in life on earth and beyond will be reached by deeds and deeds alone— deeds in the form of goodness towards your neighbour and those in trouble. God’s greatest love is for those who strive continuously for the care and happiness of the weak and the downtrodden.

“In all the words and preachings of the great Zarathushtra, you will not find any stress on rituals and ceremonies. He is a man of action and the religion he preaches is that of Ashoi, which is the performance of righteous acts. He demands no penance of you. He says live well, but avoid extremes and do not fail to honour and keep faith with the Lord, for the days of affliction will always recur and the stress and strain of life never ends. And the enemy in the form of evil, will persist in its attempt to bring about the downfall of man, so that vigilance, at all times is vital. “The fight is unending. Our world is a battleground for the forces of good and evil. Both the principals are constantly at war in man as well as in creation. It is our duty and should be our earnest endeavour to rout the forces of evil.

“Zarathushtra has given us the Lord’s three talismans (Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Ashem Vohu and Yenghe Hatam). Use them when in trouble. But remember that it is only fair that the Lord whom you call upon for help, should be the One you honour and keep faith with each day of your life, not just when you are in trouble and need Him.”

Asfandiyar always ended his talks with the recital of one of Zarathushtra’s five Gathas which he liked best and which fully supported his words.

GATHA VOHU-KSHATHRA YASNA 51

“The Highest shall be reached by deeds alone.
My deeds are dedicated to You,
O Lord and Amshaspands Teach me to know Your will, to hold Your Strength. . . .

*The dupes of False Ones,
passing through this life give satisfaction scant to me,
no joy do they bring.
Within the space of this ONE life on Earth
Perfection can be reached by fervent Souls ardent
in zeal, sincere in their toil. . . .*

*Those False Ones through false teachings at last into
destruction shall be led.
In the Abode of Untruth shall they dwell. . . .*

*He who strives to understand and reach true Life,
should preach the Laws of Mazda to mankind
better by acts of service than by words....”*

But Asfandiyar’s words brought cheer and hope to those who wished to fight for themselves and gave courage to the weak, so that they awakened from their sullen stupor and began to think about doing something for themselves.

He urged the strong to assist the old and the weak. He never forgot the needs of the meek and the lowly. His very life was dedicated to them. Before long the priests and the intellectuals, who found great wisdom and sublimity in the Gathas, readily helped in the reform of their religion; and the new faith was soon accepted, both by them and by the people. Fire temples were erected all over the country and to each a copy of the Zend-Avesta was sent.

Asfandiyar was a hero and a warrior and his words were forceful and even aggressive. But even as he was fighting for the good, he fell victim to a conspiracy. The nobles surrounding the King charged him as coveting the throne. Notwithstanding his denials, Vishtaspa threw him in chains and sent him to prison at the fort of Gumbadan. After this, Vishtaspa himself travelled to Zubulistan to promulgate the Zoroastrian religion there. He was received by Rustam the son of Zal, the son of Sam, the son of Nariman, heroes all of Iran, great heroes in the grandest tradition of chivalry and valour. Zal and Rustam embraced the Zoroastrian faith, as did their nobles and countrymen. The study of the Zend-Avesta was begun and the lighting of sacred fires in temples took place all over Zubulistan. For two years Zal and his son Rustam entertained Vishtaspa, but the imprisonment of Asfandiyar caused dissension from the tributary kings.

The last call All this while Zarathushtra had remained in Bactria with King Lehrasp, father of Vishtaspa. Both were old men now. Zarathushtra was 77 years of age. After the great battle between Vishtaspa and Arjasp, he began to feel that his task in this great land was almost over. He knew that he had done his job well, for hitherto no man had given up his life for his God—and for a God, above all, that none could even see.

So, he was biding his time. He had come to this land at the will of God Almighty and, when it suited the Lord, he would leave. His inner self told him his time was running out.

Arjasp was in his mountain lair, licking his wounds and nursing his pride. Zarathushtra had humbled him by instilling steel into the blood and body of puny men, who otherwise would have trembled to defy his will. Seeing Bactria undefended and Zarathushtra alone, Arjasp vainly thought that at last the time had come when he could destroy the new faith. He ordered his General Kahram to move swiftly and seize this opportunity to slay Zarathushtra, slaughter all his mobeds, and, if Asfandiyar was found there, to kill him also.

That day, the air seemed heavy, the birds stopped singing and the trees set up a wail. Zarathushtra as usual got up before dawn. He had now stopped travelling and preaching throughout the country and served at the Atashkaddah as a priest.

He awoke early and took on the duties of manning the Boe at the start of the first Gah, striking the bell to ward off the evil ones and to commence the prayers of the day.

That day, at dawn, his blood felt a bit chilled though the weather was warm. At sunrise, he gazed at the rising ball of fire and he knew that his time had come. How? That was for God to decide. But he knew that he would not see the sunset that day. He set about his task of tending the Sacred Fires and began his prayers. Soon, kneeling before it, he was lost in meditation.

A little after sunrise, the gates of the city were stormed by Kahram’s men and fighting erupted in the streets. As soon as the aged King Lehrasp received the news, he ran with a handful of men to protect the Atash-kaddah, just in time to meet a large force of the enemy. A bloody fight ensued on the steps and many a mobed, old and young, joined the battle, paying dearly with their lives.

At length none remained alive, except the old warrior-king, who with two hands wielded with puissance his mighty sword of Hind and the mound of dead that lay around his feet served testimony to his valour. But death now stalked this grand old man, and like a pack of jackals, the foe clamoured around him, stabbing and jabbing at him from every side, till exhausted, he dropped to the ground. They hacked him to pieces and then their leader ran up the steps and slunk noiselessly into the ancient temple.

Zarathushtra was lost to all the shouting and the noise outside and still knelt in meditation before the Holy Fire. The cowardly assassin crept up to him and, with a swift movement of his arm, pushed an Arabian dagger into the kneeling body. A gasp, a low cry of pain, and exhalation of breath and he slumped to the ground, whispering, “O ! Mazda the only One,” and in his dying spasms, his arms flung wide his prayer beads which flicked the face of the evil man. A terrible animal-like scream rent the air, travelling to the depths of hell and announced the assassin’s arrival there, while his body was flung with a mighty force across the room, causing no scratch, no cut—just one angry lump of bruised flesh, turning black from head to foot.

Oblivious to all, Zarathushtra tried to rise but finding no strength, cast one last glance at the Sacred Fire and as his life ebbed away, murmured ‘Ashem Vohu’ as his body slumped to the floor.

When God sent Zarathushtra to earth, he had said, “When your mission on earth is completed, I shall send Sraosha with his galaxy of angels to greet and bring you back to Heaven.” And so, as his soul (Urvan) ebbed out of his mortal remains, Sraosha and his angels were there to lead him out from earth. As they rose, Zarathushtra looked down at the land, saw his people; a sudden stirring in his heart pulled him earthwards. He found himself held and drawn upwards instead.’

Looking up—there was the great beyond—a flaming, burning brightness beckoning to him from boundless time. Then with an effort, he threw off the earthly bonds and the ‘Great Soul’ now free, surged forward, streaking like a white bolt, searing through space into the flaming brightness.

There was now only time—boundless time.*

*descriptive term to denote eternity, has no religious significance whatsoever.



THE LAST CALL

Summation

And so at the Will of God, Spitama Zarathushtra lived, taught his new religion and died in the land of Iran. What did his life show? Many things; amongst them, that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable. God sent down to our land a 'Great Soul' to live amongst the people and suffer as every other. He was given his moments of despair and triumph, sorrow and joy, and finally, he was brutally murdered. Even the life of Asfandiyar abounds in this seeming injustice. Sometimes the most innocent suffers and it almost tears your fabric of faith. Again and again, the cry comes forth: Why? Why? But, in fact, such lives serve as signs to guide us in our task ahead.

Let us trace our steps a little to the beginning. We cannot see God. We have no proof of His being. Yet we believe in Him—our Lord Ahuramazda. We have this faith. We also believe that God's aim is the total destruction of evil from the universe and the final gathering of all souls to Him sanctified, to live the good life in a world of Good Thoughts—Good Words—Good Deeds in eternal bliss. We also know our God to be infinitely just and all-merciful.

Since we accept the above, then the rest of the Lord's teachings must be remembered for a better understanding of life. He has placed before us His attributes to guide us in our lives as He Himself is governed by them. Then come His Fravashi. They tell us what is right and what is wrong as we go through life, but he has also given us freedom of choice, a free will to choose as we wish, good or evil. He advises us that if we do good, we will be rewarded with perfection and immortality in the life to come, for the evil there is punishment. He has added to it subjective recompense, which in simple words mean, virtue is its own reward and vice its own punishment. Life then becomes a series of actions and reactions. In the complex picture that takes place He has added Khwarenah. This is an inherent force within us from God, which is in a way, the reason for our being created, the final cause for our being in this world.

Khwarenah of an individual is the job God has set him to do in this world i.e. God's purpose for him here and now. For in Zoroastrianism in all its phases, is a religion that accepts this life here and now. This force is within us and within all creation and is meant to help bring salvation to God's creation and take it on to completion of God's aim.

Therefore man's wickedness and acceptance of evil sets into play the entire life of tribulations and unhappiness that we see around us. Wanton behaviour brings pain and misery. Sensual pleasures bring disease and unhappiness. Greed and jealousy destroy all human values. Pain and suffering are God's corrective teachers.

It is by man's choice of evil, that death and destruction has entered this Universe. When man destroys evil within and around him, immortality and perfect life will be his.

Many suffer and die young, others live with God's name on their lips, yet they suffer. These are God's chosen ones and their lasting reward of perfection and immortality in the life to come is assured. These are the souls that have given themselves up to accomplish God's great design, to guide people through the quicksands and shoals of life. The Prophet Zarathushtra and the Zoroastrian hero Asfandiyar, the many whom we see about us who are good, yet suffer, stand testimony to the faith needed by man that God exists and theirs will be the kingdom of heaven.

There are others who have lived a good and difficult life and when they believe their reward is about to be realised, and as they grasp it, it dissolves and disappears. Bitterness could drive them from God, but if their goodness and faith persist, they will look within themselves and find an element of avarice and greed tinging their act. It is God's love that prevents them from becoming captives of their greed and safeguards their future happiness.

There are others who are evil, yet enjoy the fruits of their greed and dishonesty. Retribution will surely be theirs in the life to come. God's administration has no weakness or flaws. His mill sometimes grinds slowly, but evenly and without fail.

The Khwarenah of the people who fulfills God's purpose set for him here on this earth is enriched and ennobled. For those who are false to God in His design are separated from their Khwarenah and will meet His retribution. The Fravashi guides you as to what is right and wrong. The Khwarenah helps you to have faith and persist in the course of action or purpose set for you in this life by God.

Therefore, if all these factors are firmly placed in our heart and our mind, we will then have the fortitude to appreciate that God's perspective is the total universe while ours is only a minute speck of the whole. His aim is the total redemption of the universe and therefore what appears to us as great suffering is, on the Lord's larger canvas, something definite and necessary to the total plan. We have not the capacity to follow the weave and see how and where it ends.

Trust in God we must and so we should now address ourselves to something we can do as is required of each of us: be a good Zoroastrian.

What does this call for?

It is simple. A good Zoroastrian is one who looks after and keeps the body, mind and soul pure.

BODY: We keep our bodies clean by avoiding contact with things foul and observing the rules of hygiene. We then avoid dirt, germs and vermin which are the beginning of evil and disease. We must eat well and live well, thereby keeping the body strong and healthy. Fasting and asceticism are not for us, for anything which weakens the body by starvation and disease is wrong, as it reduces the strength of man to do good and work against evil. Therefore, the first requisite is a clean and healthy body.

MIND: The Good Mind is an essential requisite for a good Zoroastrian. Ahuramazda is the father of the Good Mind and Zarathushtra conversed with the Lord through the power of his Good Mind.

To acquire it, you first need to have a living faith in the existence of our Lord Ahuramazda and the truth He portrays. This should be out of conviction and not just through tradition. You must then cultivate the truth and reject the lie

You must act right mindedly and righteously and see that the needs of the meek and the lowly become your greatest concern. The central concept of your mind should hold the three eternal truths revealed to us by Zarathushtra and these are Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.

We are further required to look after the mind by avoiding sloth as it dulls the intellect. Evil books and pictures only inflame and destroy the mind, but appreciation of all things beautiful, feeds and improves the mind. So we must read good books and learn to appreciate and enjoy music, painting and different forms of art.

We are enjoined to be charitable and most Zoroastrians are by nature so inclined, but an important aspect is the charity of thought. If we could think evil of others, before long we will speak evil of them. This could generate an uncontrolled anger in both and spark spiteful and cruel acts, which in turn would breed hatred — all harmful to the acquiring of the Good Mind. Remember, our thoughts mould our words and actions.

One of our greatest prayers, "Yenghe Hatam," tells us to concern ourselves with and also read about, the lives of revered and noble men. By merely turning our thoughts to them helps create the Good Mind, our greatest need.

SOUL: We keep faith with God by remembering and honouring Him with prayer as we wake up at the break of day and again as we go to sleep, visiting the fire temple several times a year on birthdays and on the New Year, and visiting the 'Iranshah' at Udvada to revitalise the flame within us. By all this, we are building an inner strength—our faith in God—without which we are barren. In life, there are problems and afflictions; we face them better with our faith in God.

God Himself, as we have seen from the Gathas has helped to create some of the prayers and shown the value of the Sacred Fire. Therefore, Zarathushtra built temples to sanctify the Holy Fire and handed over to us both the Lord's prayers and the temples for our use and as a link between God and man.

Our religion does not enforce any special day for visits to the fire temple. In fact, it does not believe in force, it values greater deeds done voluntarily. But one of its purpose is to establish a communication between man and his God, for when man ceases to pray, he snaps his link with God.

Yet, human as we are, the sublimeness of our religion is open to abuse. It is our strength and our weakness, for it allows the strong and true to act correctly and voluntarily but affords the lazy, the weak and the pleasure loving an excuse to say, "God is in my heart, and in my home and I need to do no more." Such men forget that our God has made nothing compulsory in our religion, but he has also stressed heavily that man must honour his word and forswear the lie; and so those who believe that superficial words will suffice, should know that these last two laws leave no room for hiding their falseness even in the secret recesses of their heart, for God is immanent.

Therefore, in the final analysis, an individual is required to be a good parent, a good neighbour and a good master, a person of integrity who keeps his word, a man who places great value on charity, justice and the welfare of his fellowmen and, most important, a man who honours and keeps faith with his God.

*If thou wilt not find Him, even now.
Where wilt thy soul wander,
For life is but transient,
and the hour grows late.*

THE KING'S STORIES

ASHOI THE DOCTRINE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE GOOD LIFE

Spitama Zarathushtra



Epics of Iran
Stories retold from
FIRDAUSE
real name Abdul Kavim-i-Mansur

EPICS are those traditions half fact, half fiction, concerning national heroes whose mighty deeds are handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, pervaded by the magical, inimitable fragrance of the childhood of the world, weaned in an age of supernatural powers, written in the literary adolescence of a nation.

A poet then must come whose heart is steeped in ancient lore and his mind in the present. When such a man and such a moment meet, an epic of indescribable dimensions unfolds and so was born the mighty epic of Persian kings and heroes, the *Shahnamah*. That unforgettable poet was Firdausi, a Muslim who spent his life writing in praise of Zoroastrian heroes, their God Ormuzd and, as the Muslims say, the “religion of the Fire,” who yet found his heaven by his divine couplet in praise of God.

*“Thou art whate’er exists, above, below.
What is, Thou art; what Thou art, who can know?”*

Amongst the first of the Ahura rulers was Jamshid, blessed by Ahuramazda. He rose to great heights but because of his false pride, God permitted his downfall, for he wished to show that evil begets evil. When Ahuramazda felt full punishment had been meted out to the Iranians, he sent one of Jamshid’s race, Faridun, to avenge and regain the throne from Zuhak, who then divided the world amongst his three sons. Salam, the eldest, was given the Indo-European (Western) regions, the second son, Tur, was given Turan (North Central Asia) and the youngest son, Iraj, was given Iran.

The epics are pervaded by the unceasing efforts of the kingdom of darkness (Turan) to invade and subdue the kingdom of light (Iran). The Archangel Sraosha and the Simurg (a legendary creature half-eagle, half-lion) appear for the latter and sorcerers, Divs and dragons for the former.

The old Zoroastrian faith was singularly simple, pure and strong and it is wonderful how well the Mohammedan Firdausi apprehended it, except in one detail—the Muslim concept of fate and destiny. This runs through his stories as a white thread through a brilliant, colourful weave, and is contrary to the Zoroastrian belief that destiny lies in the hands of the individuals themselves.

There are only a few epics of world renown. Among them, one Teutonic, the *Nibelungen Lied*, two from Greece, the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey*, two from India, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and one from Persia, the *Shahnamah*.

Heine has said of the *Nibelungen Lied* that it is a poem hewn out of granite. Then well might it be said that the *Shahnamah* is carved out of marble, translucent and luminous throughout the ages, depicting an ancient grandeur.

A nation derives its grandeur and a special place in the world from the manner in which its young know and regard their epics. An ancient once said,

TAKE AWAY LEGEND AND MYTH . . . AND ITS PEOPLE PERISH.

Asfandyar the valiant

We take up our tale where we left off. Zardusht, the Holy One murdered; the old King Lehasp dying the death of a warrior, defending him; and the total slaughter of the 700 Mobeds in Bactria. In the fighting, the two daughters of King Vishtaspa, Humai and Beh-Afrid, were taken prisoners by Arjasp’s men. In the confusion the Queen escaped alone with the help of her personal retinue to the city of Seistan in Zubulistan, where King Vishtaspa had been for the last two years. Asfandyar, imprisoned in the fortress of Gumbadan, remained safe and unharmed.

After Vishtaspa and the Queen, Asfandyar had been the first Prince of Iran to be initiated into the Zoroastrian faith by Zardusht. From the start, a close bond existed between the two and as a token of his feelings for the Prince, Zardusht had presented him with a silver chain as a talisman. He had told the boy, “Wear this chain around your neck, but in battle wear it around the wrist of your sword-arm. The strength of Ahuramazda will be behind your fist.”

Asfandyar was the hero of the first battle won by the Iranians against the demons of Turan. He was also the first ambassador of Zardusht to all the nearby kingdoms, where he spread the religion of the One Supreme God. Yet, his father Vishtaspa imprisoned him on the false charge that he coveted the throne. What an injustice! What a crime! For if he really desired the throne, even as Vishtaspa put him in irons, he could have forced himself free, and with his popular support, put his father to the sword and taken the throne for himself.

However, the teachings of Zardusht were too immersed in him to permit him to go against his father, and his faith that Ahuramazda would protect him was supreme. He truly believed that what took place now was God’s will and accepted his misfortune as a pattern in the overall plan of the Great Lord. So it was, for if he had been free and not within the safe perimeter of the fortress, he might have been overpowered and killed in Bactria by Arjasp’s men.

When Vishtaspa heard from his Queen, he assembled his army and immediately set out for Iran. Near Bactria he met the full force of the sorcerer’s troops and received a crushing defeat. Everywhere the cry was raised, “Zardusht is dead, Zardusht is dead” and more than anything else, the Iranian army was demoralised.

At last, Vishtaspa found himself perched with the remnants of his force on a small hill, completely surrounded by Arjasp’s army, waiting to make their final bid to destroy the heart of Iran, as they believed; but the heart of Iran was not there, it was in the fortress of Gumbadan.

Since Zardusht’s death, Jamasp had taken over as the Chief of the Magi and was now with Vishtaspa on the hill. Jamasp conceived the plan of breaking through the enemy lines, disguised as a Turanian soldier, and freeing Asfandyar from his fortress-prison, so that the young Prince could come to the rescue of his father. But when he broached the king with his plan, Vishtaspa was gloomy and did not foresee much chance of success, remembering his past injustice to Asfandyar.

Jamasp knew the Prince better and fully appreciated the influence of Zardusht's teachings on him. He was sure Asfandiyar would bear no grudge, as he was a true Zoroastrian and a righteous man. In desperation, Vishtaspa finally agreed and, to add persuasion to Jamasp's message, told him to assure his son that if he saved him this time, the throne of Iran would be his.

Jamasp got through the enemy lines that night but before he got much further, he was intercepted and recognised by one of Asfandiyar's sons, Nush Azar. The son joined Jamasp and both rode to the fortress. As mentioned earlier, many tributary kings, who had fallen out with Vishtaspa, had rallied to join Asfandiyar at the fort.

When Jamasp entered the fort with Nush Azar, the kings raised a cry against Jamasp. They advised Asfandiyar first to declare himself King of Iran with their backing and then go to aid his father. Asfandiyar turned to his friends and said, "My good friends, my father, the King, lives and I have no wish to be called an usurper for the rest of my life. My God is with me and he tells me I must first fight and remove the demon army from the fair soil of Iran, before I can think of myself; let us then go."

At dawn, Asfandiyar set out with his son Nush Azar, Jamasp and the other kings, and as they moved across the country, men flocked to the violet banner which Asfandiyar carried in his right hand. The glitter of Zardusht's silver chain around his wrist, high in the air, as he held aloft the banner, was an exhilarating call to the men of Iran. Everywhere, eager voices called, "Look! Look! Zardusht's talisman! See the soul of the Holy One is behind our valiant Prince." The voices became a roar, the little band of courageous men a battalion, and this battalion a crusading army.

At the mound, the beleaguered Vishtaspa was becoming desperate. Daily the position was becoming untenable; by the next day all food and water would be finished. Vishtaspa thought of God and Zardusht, and looking out to the East from where the great sun would rise on the morrow, he shut his eyes and prayed.

First he heard a low murmur and then he was overwhelmed with the din of battle. For a moment he felt he had passed away and the noise of fighting was as from another place, for he and his force seemed to be unaffected and calm. He was on the hill, but there was a terrible battle ensuing below, around the perimeter of the hill. He heard above the din of fighting at many points, "Zardusht lives, Zardusht lives, we are lost."

Where the fighting was thickest, he saw a mighty warrior on a white horse. In one hand, a violet banner flew gallantly and with the other he dealt terrific blows with a bull-headed mace, right and left and wherever an enemy dared showed his face, as if the wrath of God was behind his blows.

Arjasp from a distance was the first to see that this great warrior was none other than Asfandiyar and his heart quailed. This was one man who

could put the fear of God in his demon army. He did not wait for the outcome of the battle. He knew that the moment Asfandiyar, with Zardusht's blessings, closed in on him, no demon could withstand this combination of hero and God. Striking spurs, he fled from the battlefield. Now all was lost for the besieging army, and before long it was destroyed. But once again the magician Arjasp had escaped.

Earlier he had sent off a hundred camel loads of plunder which he had looted from Bactria with four of his younger sons. Kargasar, the General he had placed in charge of his army, in a personal skirmish during the heat of battle, was taken prisoner by Asfandiyar. His other mainstay, General Kahram, had fled.

An explanation is required here about the cry "Zardusht lives" raised in battle by the Turanians. Jamasp was now Chief of the Magi and, dressed as such, rode in battle beside Asfandiyar. Perhaps the Turanians mistook Jamasp for Zardusht, a confusion which was accentuated by the Iranians shouting "Zardusht is still with us", inspired as they were by Asfandiyar and his talisman. It is possible that at this moment and with this incident, the idea may have dawned upon Jamasp to call himself Zardusht, and with it may have come the future line of Zardushts. After all, the title of the Chief of the Magi was Zardusht. In the case of Spitama, the use of the word 'Zardusht' for his own proper name added to the confusion.

When Asfandiyar met his father in his royal palace, they embraced, and the father showed his gratitude, showering upon his son great gifts, palaces and slaves and making known his intention to surrender his throne. Asfandiyar was touched and told Vishtaspa he had no intention of becoming king till he had fully avenged the foul murder of his grandfather and Zardusht, rescued his sisters and wreaked his vengeance on the Turkomans.

After due rest, Asfandiyar and his army left Bactria for Turan. He chose a number of good generals and raised to the highest rank, Bashutan, and gave the command of the army to him. He also took with him the captive Turkoman, General Kargasar. At the frontier where two roads met, Asfandiyar struck camp. That evening, as the sun went down and the stars lit up the sky, he had a fine table placed before his tent and called for his generals to bring forth the prisoner Kargasar. On the table he placed four goblets of gold filled to the brim with choice wines. Then he called for singers to entertain his warriors and before them all, he bade Kargasar relax, drink the wine and listen to the singing. After the singers withdrew, Asfandiyar with terrible suddenness bore down on Kargasar, saying, "Where is Ruin-Diz, the hidden castle of Arjasp? This tell me now, tell me truly and straight. For if you lie, I

Ruin-Diz The Devil's castle in the clouds

will tear you apart, limb from limb.” The ferocity of the words and their suddenness after the songs and wine so upset Kargasar that he choked.

Asfandiyar now had his dagger in one hand and with the other was caressing the sharp edge of the blade. His lips formed a thin slit and the flare of his nostrils indicated to those around him that he could be ruthless enough to carry out his threat. Captivity had already softened Kargasar and each day he wondered when he would meet a fearsome death. It looked as if it was now. The tension was too great for the broken man. He flung himself at Asfandiyar’s feet and cried that he would speak the truth. Amidst sobs he declared,

*“Three roads hence to the fortress access yield,. . .
One road needs three months, and the second two,. . .
Upon the third for sev’n days must you strive,
At Ruin-Diz upon the eighth arrive.
Lions and wolves and dragons there abound,
From whose claws safety none hast ever found....”*

When Asfandiyar heard these words, he held his breath for a while and gazed beyond Kargasar in deep thought. Then he mused, “The best way seems the shortest one. Demons and sorcerers I can meet, and I trust in God to help me defeat them. The longer ways would mean great hardship for my soldiers.” Kargasar looked up in horror and said, “No, no! That way lie seven stages of great Evil and you will surely be destroyed. But then, none in living memory has ever reached the entrance alive by any way to Ruin-Diz. Turn back, O foolish youth, why throw your life away?”

Asfandiyar paid no heed to his statement and put another question, “Now tell me truly, what is the first stage?” To which Kargasar replied,

*“A male and female wolf first come unto view.
Like a huge elephant each of the two.
With horns like antelope upon their heads,
Lions to fight they by desire are led.
Like raging elephants their teeth are seen,
Their shoulders burly and their loins are lean....”*

With this Asfandiyar rose and walked away to his tent. The warriors took the prisoner away and soon the camp was silent. Except for the sentries on guard, Asfandiyar and his army slept. At dawn, the army was again on the march. This time it moved towards Puran and the seven Evils that guarded the path to the Devil’s eyrie—Ruin-Diz. Soon the countryside changed its very nature. Grass, bushes, and wild flowers gave way to thistles and craggy black trees with long thorns which tore one’s flesh like the talons of wild creatures. A mist seemed to rise from the ground and the air grew cold and clammy; the larger trees had clusters of leaves which shut out all the sunlight. The atmosphere was dark and brooding.

Asfandiyar stationed his army away from this dank area and made them camp in the broad sunlight. Calling Bashutan and his commanders,

he told them to be cheerful, look after the army well and prepared to leave. Some of his commanders wanted to go with him, but he would have none of it and said, “I am the leader and must clear the path. You will have your day when we break down the walls of Ruin-Diz.” Wrapping his khaftan firmly around his armour, Asfandiyar mounted his white steed, felt the free movement of his sword in its scabbard, saw that the quiver of poisoned arrows on his back was full, then bending over to his bodyguard, took over his great bow and rode into the forbidding forest.

He had not gone far when he found himself trailed by some invisible foe. He could hear swift padded footsteps, but he could see nothing, not even the malevolent red eyes that looked upon him from time to time from out of dense undergrowth. His khaftan was now almost in shreds when without any warning his noble steed tripped and fell, throwing him to the ground. Vicious growls filled his ears; tearing fangs strove to destroy him. Deep scars were gouged into his armour but he was untouched and turning around beat the animals back with his bow. Then securing himself against a huge tree, he rained a flight of arrows on the foe. The monsters, elephantine in size, tiger-like in their ferocity, ran amuck to escape the arrows. Their noise and destruction were fearful, trees were violently uprooted, the undergrowth crushed and an arena was cleared for the fight that was to ensue.

In spite of all their frenzy, a number of arrows did pierce their skin, but, where other lesser animals would have dropped dead, they made ready to spring on Asfandiyar. Terrible snarls rose from their throats and, crouching low, the two animals from either side prepared to spring for the kill. Suddenly, the air was filled with a white bolt hurling itself with lightning force onto one of the sinister creatures. It was the white stallion coming to the aid of its master. The charge of the stallion brought the animals to a sudden halt and teeth and hooves flayed the air. Now the other wolf joined the fray, and the poor stallion was all but crushed in between.

His steed’s intervention gave Asfandiyar valuable time to gather his wits and take a breath. But for his great strength, the first blow would have crushed him. Now, with his battle cry on his lips and his mighty sword in his right hand, he leapt on the mass of flesh, claws, hooves and teeth and struck blow after blow on the two hateful creatures, whose total fury was bent on destroying the poor stallion. The poison from the arrows was also now active in their blood stream. As one animal staggered loose, Asfandiyar with a mighty swing of his blade sheared off its head. Then using his sword as a spear, he plunged it up to the hilt into the other animal’s heart, bringing it down on the ground, dead. The stallion was massacred and died before Afandiyar could move to its side. Great sorrow filled his heart and tears rolled down his cheeks. Then wisdom prevailed and, realising it unsafe to stay there any longer, he moved swiftly back to camp to let his anxious men know that the first of the seven obstacles had been breached successfully.

As the sun set, Asfandiyar stood in silent prayer to his God Ahuramazda for his bounty. That over, once again the table, the wine goblets and

Kargasar were assembled before him. After three cups of wine, Kargasar was asked about the second confrontation, and tearful came the reply:

*"O Prince of lion heart and warrior bold,
At the next stage a lion thee wilt meet.
With him no crocodile couldst e'er compete ..."*

Next day, the sun rose bright in the azure blue of the sky and Asfandiyar went forth with a light heart. As before, Bashutan and the generals bade him goodbye with anxious eyes. With the help of his mighty sword Asfandiyar killed the two lions by noon and, washed the lions' blood off his body in a pool. Kneeling in prayer to the merciful God, he said, " O pure Ruler of the land, You have destroyed by Your power these wild beasts, though by my hands." And then he made his way back to his men who received him with great joy.

A journey into the unknown

Once again at night, for the third time, Kargasar was brought before him. Three goblets of wine were served to him, after which he was again questioned, "What will the morrow bring?" Kargasar seemed happier and said,

*"A dragon there shalt come that to its maw
Shalt with its breath the fish from ocean draw.
He with his mouth shalt light up fire and flame,
And as the solid rock is made his frame..."*

Through the night Asfandiyar made his men prepare a large chariot of wood and all around it great cutting swords were fixed. In the centre, he had a huge chest of wood secured. Next morning, the sun rose bright and warm. Asfandiyar dressed himself in a coat of mail made of thin white silk and steel wires instead of his heavy coat of arms for he intended to enter the mouth of the dragon and destroy this great animal from within. Its rock-like body, mighty claws and tail, not to mention breath of flame, made fighting from outside all but useless.

The mighty dragon heard the loud rumble of the wooden chariot and came rushing down the slopes of the mountains where he dwelt. His eyes were bloodshot, his nostrils blew smoke and thunder and his mouth belched fire.



Since the chariot was made of the thick green logs of freshly cut trees, it did not burn easily, whereas an iron chariot and a coat of arms would have soon become red hot. Advancing with his open mouth looking like a big, wide, black cave, the dragon in a moment sucked in the horses, chariot and all. In that brief span of time, Asfandiyar opened the chest and locked himself within. Then the chariot with the swords stuck in its throat, blocking all flames and breath. The monster roared and shook its head in great pain. Getting weaker and weaker, it placed its head on the ground with its mouth forced open. Asfandiyar immediately opened the chest, drew out his sword and plunging it through the roof of the monster's mouth, shattered its brains. In its dying gasp, smoke and moisture belched forth, throwing Asfandiyar out senseless, a good distance away.

Bashutan had seen all this and had rushed forward with a large force of soldiers. A great wail arose when they saw the senseless form of Asfandiyar being spat out by this vile animal. There was no wound on his body but for quite a while he was unconscious because of the poisonous fumes inhaled by him. They carried him to nearby stream and bathed his temple with cool compresses. Slowly, he regained his senses and, as his strength came back, he rose to his feet like some drunkard after a wild night.

He washed himself in the stream, called for fresh clothes and then raised his hands and voice in thankful prayer to his Divine Lord and Protector. His army praised and admired this great hero, whose thoughts were always for his God Ahuramazda and not for the mighty deeds he wrought. Meanwhile, Kargasar's heart bled with sorrow when he saw Asfandiyar, whom he had reckoned to be dead, come to life.

Near this stream the army made its camp, and soon the tents were raised. The table was laid and three goblets of gold filled with wine stood on it. Then as before, the warriors brought Kargasar, who came this night weeping. There was great laughter when Kargasar was asked to drink up his wine. All knew the question that would come and, laughing, Asfandiyar said, "Now, look upon that dragon's twisting tail and tell me, what will befall me tomorrow?" Kargasar wiped his eyes and moaned,

" O victorious Lord, tomorrow will bring a sorceress who is second only to her great master."

Next day, the sun rose bright and clear. The world seemed light and gay. Asfandiyar insisted on his best clothes, then asked for a guitar and, taking a goblet of wine in his hand, prepared for his ordeal of the day.

As he rode towards the forest, it turned into a paradise; tulips of all colours filled his path, the stream gave off the fragrance of rose-water and the hideous trees took on a friendly hue. It seemed but right to get off his steed and walk down this beautiful path. Then seeing a fountain, he went and sat at its edge, sipping the wine and strumming

a light tune on his guitar. Soon he was singing some of his favourite melodies and, sighing to himself, said, "Ah! it has always been my lot to face dragons and lions and misfortune's claws and no profit has this world given me, nor has it ever brought me a Pari (fairy) with a gladsome eye." The sorceress heard his words and decided to ensnare him with a fair woman's charm. She changed her ugly self into a fair young Turki girl:

*"Chinese brocade her cheek, with musk for scent!
Of cypress stature and her cheek sun-fair,
Loose hanging unto her feet her musky hair,
Forward tow'rds Asfandiyar she pressed,
Rose-meads her cheeks, a flower in her breast."*

There was fragrance in her youth and her beauty, melody in her graceful walk and sweet welcome in her eyes. Never before in his life had the prince met one so beautiful or more willing to be his. She stood close to him, overpowering his senses with her fragrant beauty and her warmth. Asfandiyar felt an inner alarm and sensed that if he was to achieve his purpose, he must act at once. Smiling gallantly, he unclasped the silver talisman around his neck and with a charming gesture placed it around her swan-like neck and fixed the clasp. Then, holding the chain in his hands, as if it were a collar around a dog, he called firmly, "In the name of my God and Zardusht, who has blessed this chain, show yourself as you truly are." The smiling beauty had already become an angry vixen and as her powers were swept away by the strength of Zardusht's talisman, her soft, silken gold hair turned into a wriggling, dirty mass alive with lice and vermin crawling all over her head; her beauty faded and she became a hideous hag with a large hooked nose and black warts on her face. A revolting stench began to ooze out of her crooked, putrid body. Waiting no longer, Asfandiyar plunged his dagger into her heart and let her fall dead at his feet. Then washing in the fountain, he raised his arms in a prayer of thanksgiving.

That night, Kargasar told Asfandiyar that the next trial would be against a phoenix. For the fifth time Asfandiyar succeeded and destroyed the phoenix and again gave thanks to the Lord before returning to the camp. The sixth ordeal was one where nature sets itself against man. The wind and the sand was to blow and the earth was to be covered with ice and snow, in which no man could survive. This came about the next day. Trees were uprooted, the ground was covered deep in snow, and all ponds and streams turned into ice. The soldiers in armour turned blue and horses froze still with cold and it seemed certain all would die. Asfandiyar called his generals and said, "We cannot fight nature and our Lord Ahuramazda is the only one who can command nature to retrace its step. Let every man kneel down and say the Ahunavar prayers and if there is one who knows not the whole formula, let him repeat just the word, 'Yatha'."

The entire host as one, knelt down and prayed in all earnest to God to save them at this most grievous moment. The sky which was grey and overcast began to throw out fingers of light. The snow stopped falling, the sun began to peep out from behind the clouds and the

world began to grow warmer. Finally, there was warmth all over and the sun shone bright. The ice and snow were swept away by a warm and friendly breeze. The soldiers were still on their knees and no one arose till he had thanked his Protector fully from his heart.

The next day, the entire army began its march forward. It was noon and Asfandiyar in astonishment heard the sound of cranes in the air. Kargasar had told them not to expect any rivers or waters ahead. As he looked around at the birds, he heard loud cries of distress from the marching army ahead and, riding desperately to the aid of his men, found them drowning in the river. With great difficulty, some of the men were saved and Asfandiyar called for Kargasar in great anger. When confronted, he showed his true self and, flaring up, shouted that he cared nothing if the whole army perished, as he had suffered enough hardship. Before more could be said, Asfandiyar in anger slew him. Then turning to his men, he ordered huge skins to be inflated with air. The soldiers' armour was placed on horses and to each was tied an inflated skin. Swiftly the army crossed the river, and so the seventh and last ordeal was over. The men washed themselves in the river and then Asfandiyar and his army knelt in silent prayer to their Divine Lord for having delivered them through all the seven ordeals. Now way up in the black clouds stood Ruin - Diz . . . a dark menace.

Ruin - Diz, the Devil's eyrie, Arjasp's impregnable castle in the clouds, lay on a rugged mountain. Asfandiyar surveyed it from different angles and arrived at one conclusion — it was impregnable. The cliffs were insurmountable and the walls, wide enough for four horsemen, were unbreachable. There was only one way left—stratagem.

Asfandiyar decided he would disguise himself as a merchant. He accordingly had 100 camels prepared, of which 10 were laden with gold, five with Chinese brocades, five with jewels and valuables. On the remaining 80, he placed 80 pairs of chests, each chest containing one of his best warriors armed to the teeth. On approaching the castle, he was met by Turanian nobles anxious to buy, but he refused to display his wares, pleading that the best were for the great King Arjasp and until they had been viewed by him personally, he was not prepared to make a sale to anyone else.

This pleased Arjasp, who immediately sent for him and allowed him to use a large building inside the castle to store his wares. Jokingly the king told Asfandiyar that if an eagle had surmounted the seven obstacles necessary to reach the castle, they would call him a demon and not a man. When he was presented with exquisite articles and gold for allowing the disguised Asfandiyar to sell his wares to his nobles, the latter rose higher in his esteem, and the king discussed Iran, Asfandiyar and the fate of Kargasar.



The Lord's vengeance

Next day, Asfandiyar went around with a couple of camels displaying his wares to the nobles, making sales at bargain prices, yet not low enough to create suspicion. This way he secured the goodwill of all the nobles, and also made a full survey of the city. When he made known that he intended to organize a grand entertainment programme, starting it off with a great big bonfire, the news was warmly received by all.

On the appointed day, a huge bonfire was lit. This was a prearranged signal for Bashutan who was to pose as Asfandiyar and attack the castle with not too large a force. Arjasp seeing this, felt it was an opportunity to capture Asfandiyar, opened the gates and sent out Kahram, his son, with a very superior force. Soon a great battle was raging outside the castle walls. The city was almost empty of people, as some watched the battle from the city walls and others enjoyed the drinks and food provided at the great banquet.

Asfandiyar returned to his quarters and released his 160 warriors, giving them their arms and food. He divided his men into four divisions. One was to attack the gates and throw them open. The second was to destroy the Turanian nobles who were lying drunk in the city pavilion. The third was to overpower the control centre of the army in the city. The last batch he took with him to attack Arjasp's palace.

The battle outside, the sumptuous entertainment within and the emptying of the city roads by the people on the wall, put Arjasp's entire domain at Asfandiyar's mercy. He broke into Arjasp's palace and first entered the sarai (harem), where he found his two sisters, Humai and Beh-Afrid. Killing the guards, he told the two girls to hasten to the city pavilion and wait for him there.

Then Asfandiyar broke into Arjasp's bedroom; the sorcerer was awake and at the window. Now ensued a mighty hand-to-hand combat with daggers. Tables, chairs and curtains were destroyed, as if a great inferno had broken out in the room. Each man knew he was involved in a fight to the death. It was a close struggle and innumerable wounds rent both warriors, as each stabbed at the other to gain mastery. Finally Arjasp staggered and fell. Free at last, Asfandiyar unsheathed his sword and, as his enemy made to rise, severed his head with one mighty blow. So Zardusht's prophecy came to be, that the Lord would deliver justice to Arjasp in his own time and place. Asfandiyar had also thereby revenged the murder of Zardusht and Lehrasp.

Asfandiyar called his men. The head of Arjasp was impaled on a spear and carried out. The body was dragged by a rope tied to its leg and rushed to the walls where they awaited day break. Then in unison the soldiers shouted with all their strength, that Arjasp was dead and displayed the head raised high in the air. The beheaded body was thrown over the walls into the fighting arena below. Then using the spear with Arjasp's head impaled on it as a javelin, Asfandiyar sent the grim object arching high over the walls towards Bashutan and his army. Kahram and his army were as transfixed to the earth; no greater disaster could have struck them. Bashutan and his men were galvanized

to destroy their foe and as the spear descended, he galloped towards it and grasped the spear before it touched the ground; racing around, he displayed the gruesome head for friends and foes alike to see that Arjasp was slain. Asfandiyar's remaining forces now joined the attack and, opening the gates, he and his men also rushed to attack. Arjasp's entire army was destroyed and his two captured sons, Kahram and Andiraman, were hanged from the gallows. Asfandiyar, after distributing rewards among his men and loading 10,000 camels with spoils of war, sent them to Iran with his sisters.

Arjasp had been beheaded and his two sons hanged as befitted sorcerers — their city and castle of Ruin-Diz completely burnt down and destroyed. The Lord's vengeance was now complete. Asfandiyar, his sons and his victorious army descended into the valley and made camp at the bank of the river they had recently crossed. There he spoke to his men and reminded them that victory was theirs, due to the righteousness of their cause. But for God, evil would have destroyed them all, a long while ago. With his sons and generals around him, Asfandiyar bowed in homage to his God, not forgetting to thank and bless the name of Zardusht, his and mankind's Great Benefactor. For quite a while, the entire army and the little group of men at their head, stood locked in a prayer of thanksgiving to their Lord.

When Asfandiyar returned home to Bactria, he was received with great pomp and honour, as though he were a visiting king. The whole city turned out to do him honour and his father Vishtaspa and his mother Kitayun were amongst those to welcome him, and in all ways he was made to feel that he was soon to be crowned King of Iran.

Then came the great day when he was to be publicly honoured and praised as the avenger of his grandfather's and Zardusht's murder. The court was filled to capacity with nobles and visiting dignitaries. King Vishtaspa spoke in eloquent terms of his son Asfandiyar, calling him the Lord's avenging arm and one of Iran's great heroes, worthy of his place as King of Iran. However, there was still one last mission left to be accomplished before Asfandiyar could rule the country. As heir-apparent he should journey to Zubulistan and bring back Rustam in irons for certain repeated acts of discourtesy to the king.

Asfandiyar and the court were confounded. The young prince recalled the mighty deeds he had rendered at the request of Vishtaspa, to which Vishtaspa replied, "Yes, you have certainly done all that you say, but your only equal is Rustam, who thinks too highly of himself. He has not even come to help me in my war against Arjasp and I want you to

Tryst with Destiny

bring him before me in chains. When you have done this, I shall raise you to the highest level. Go, speak no more.”

To which Asfandiyar replied, “You do great wrong O King. Rustam is a great warrior and if you had called for his aid, Rustam would surely have come. I see now very clearly that you make excuses to deny me my right and you send me to my death, for which you will have to answer God.” And when he had so spoken, Asfandiyar went out of the presence of the king, and he was exceedingly sorrowful. Then he gathered together an army, and he set forth upon the road to Seistan.

As he approached Zubulistan, he sent his son Bahman ahead as his ambassador to Rustam in the hope that the youth would be able to persuade Rustam to appear in court to answer for his alleged misconduct to the king. On the way, Bahman met Zal, the father of Rustam, who treated the youth with the respect due to a grandson of the king. He took him before Rustam, and the young man delivered his father’s message.

Greatly upset and not understanding fully the purport of the king’s displeasure, Rustam told Bahman that he had always been a loyal and true son of Iran and could not accept the indignity being done him. In spite of this, he made known his intention of going over to Asfandiyar’s camp and talking to him. Then Rustam sent a messenger to Rudabeh, his mother, to make ready a great feast in his courts. And Bahman sped back to his father.

Now Asfandiyar after he had received Rustam’s message, mounted his steed and rode to meet him. And Rustam came forth, and each looked upon the other across the banks of the Hiramand river. Then Rakush, Rustam’s steed of great renown, swam across its breadth, and the hero of the world stood before Asfandiyar, who greeted him and Rustam did homage to the son of his king. He rejoiced at the sight of Asfandiyar, and said to him. “ O young man, let us talk over our differences.” Asfandiyar looked admiringly at the great might of Rustam and making his salutations to the warrior, agreed to talk over matters on which he had come to Zubulistan. He, however, refused to be Rustam’s guest saying that until differences that existed between them were settled to the satisfaction of the King of Iran, he could not meet in friendship with Rustam.

Though he spoke these words, Asfandiyar was heavy at heart, as he knew that the treatment being meted out to Rustam was unjust. However, Rustam in reply said, “If you will not visit my home, you will be placing an everlasting slur on me. It is my earnest wish that you will desist from talking about putting me in chains, and come to my house as my honoured guest.”

To this Asfandiyar insisted, “I regret I cannot dine with you and eat in friendship with you, as my father’s orders are to take you back to Bactria in chains. However, my great love for you allows me to make a truce for this day. Please, therefore, visit my tent and drink with me.”

Rustam was greatly distressed as he entered Asfandiyar’s tent and spoke with great feeling saying, “For the last 600 years, I, who have been born of Zal have served the Kings of Iran and have been the greatest of Pehlivans since the day I have entered the service of your forefathers. I have feared neither man nor demon and you as my king should know the worth of my statement.”

When Asfandiyar had listened to Rustam’s words, he smiled and said, “I entreat you to apply yourself to the winecup, for verily you shall fall tomorrow in the fight, and the days of your feasting shall be ended.”

And softly Rustam answered, “My son, since it is your final desire to fight, do not boast, for you may have to repent tomorrow when we meet in battle. However, when I have thrown you into the dust, I shall carry you home to feast with me and I shall honour you as my king, I intend later to go before your father and remove the evil within him and see that you receive your rightful heritage.”

But Asfandiyar replied, “Your words are idle, and we but waste our breath in talk of combat. Let us therefore commence the banquet.” Then Rustam, noticing that Asfandiyar did not have the chain around his wrist said, “I do not see the great Zardusht’s chain around your wrist. Why is this so?”

Asfandiyar put his hand on his collar, pushed it open and showed the chain around his neck and spoke tenderly, “The Holy One said to me, ‘Son, in battle wear it around your wrist and the strength of the Lord will be behind your fist.’ I have not come to make war on Zubulistan, I have come to entreat my great friend Rustam to come to Bactria and rectify matters with my father.”

Then Asfandiyar’s thoughts wandered, and he began telling Rustam about his great unhappiness over Zardusht’s death and said, “You know, Rustam, Zardusht was like a father to me and he has told me many a wondrous tale about my forefathers and the others who ruled over Iran.”

Rustam, wishing to keep the talk on other planes, plied Asfandiyar with wine and coaxed him to talk about Zardusht. Asfandiyar continued, “You are a Zoroastrian now, Rustam, but it will surprise you to know that before our God Ahuramazda appeared to Zardusht, He communed with several of our forefathers. This the Holy One had learnt from God Himself and told me so, one bright day, when we were together up on the hills around Bactria. Ah ! I remember the good man’s words clearly. He said, ‘I asked the Lord.’

“O Ahuramazda! Most munificent Spirit, creator of the settlements supplied with creatures, righteous one! with what man didst thou, who art Ahuramazda, first converse, besides me, who am Zarathushtra, to whom didst thou teach the Ahurian faith? . . .

Jamshid the Good and the Bad

*Then said Ahuramazda: With Yima (Jamshid), the fortunate,
the rich in flocks, O righteous Zarathushtra ! with
him I, who am Ahuramazda, conversed first among
men, besides thee, who art Zarathushtra, to him
I taught the Ahuryan faith . . .*

*Then I, who am Ahuramazda, brought forth his
implements, a golden sword and a goad decorated
with gold. Yima is to bear the royal dignity.”*

“Jamshid informed the Lord that he was a man with limited strength, but that he would do his utmost to foster the good Ahuryan faith and segregate the race of the Ahuras from that of the Divs. And so, the son of Tehmuras assumed his father’s place and crown like a worthy son, with the blessings of our Lord.

“His father Tehmuras had also been a good king, during whose reign the Divs had been subdued. He had made the whole world his slave and even the birds and wild animals had been tamed and made to eat from man’s hands. The sheep and the ox, the hawk and the falcon, the cocks and the hens, all were charmed by his sweet voice and learnt to live in captivity, help man and provide food for him. In time, he found ways and means to use the wool and hair of sheep and lambs and invented spinning.

“Hailing from such a background, Jamshid carried on the king’s good work in a fitting manner and he proclaimed,

*“I am the Glory of the Lord,. . .
I am the King and I am priest besides.
The bad man from all ill I hold away
And towards the light I show the Soul the Way..... “*

“While he thought of the higher side of life, he did not overlook the needs of the warriors, as those were perilous times. He found ways and means of working with iron and acquired the art of making weapons, swords and spears, as also the art of making clothes. He taught his people to learn to spin and weave; went on to make fine cloth of cotton, of silk, then of fur, linen and beauteous brocade. He began to trade and his country prospered.

“In time, Jamshid created four classes of people in his kingdom. The first were the Katuzis, they lived high on the hills with their thoughts and their Gods, the forerunners of the priestly class. Next came the Nisaris, the warriors, the bold and the brave, the praetorian guards of Jamshid. After this came the Nasudis, the cultivators of the land, a rough group of men, fearless, hardy and outspoken, living by the land and the food they forced out of the wild and difficult earth. The last were the Ahnukhushi—the eternal trader, men who buy and sell. As soon as men learnt to skin the wild animal, the trader was there to barter and later to sell for him; and when man learnt to cultivate the land, the trader was again there to turn food into gold and silver.

In this way the next 50 years were more prosperous for Jamshid and his men.

“Jamshid lived well and was magnanimous to his people. He forced the Divs to toil for him by the sweat of their brow and made them mix earth and water and place it into crude moulds forming rough bricks. Then he crushed stone, mixed the powder with lime and with both these began the building of houses and in time came his palaces with large baths, both warm and cold. His active and inquisitive mind led to the discovery of jewels, gold and silver from the hard rocks, and from nature’s bosom drew the secrets of balsam, camphor, musk and rosewater to delight the senses. Then he found medicament and remedies for pain and illness, and ways and means to preserve good health.”

*“On death they did not reckon in that day.
In those days idle could no man remain.
Nor were they sick nor any suffered pain.
From all trouble and all ill were they preserved....”*

“Thus his inventive brain devised means of sailing on water and so moving over vast distances with ease, improving communication with neighbouring countries and increasing trade between people and thereby the wealth of his country. Thus, another fifty years passed and soon it seemed that nothing lay concealed from Jamshid and his fame and his greatness grew. His people enjoyed great happiness and prosperity and the Lord’s law also flourished in the land. A mighty throne with gems and emeralds, gold and silver, Jamshid built for himself and ruled his country in great splendour for the next three hundred years from this throne.

“God granted Jamshid great wisdom, or else for the times he lived in, it would have been well nigh impossible for him to do the things he did. He observed the movements of the sun and the moon, noted their regular flights across the heavens and so made known to his people the day when the hours of light equalled the hours of darkness. Further, having learnt that this day—the day which heralded spring and the birth of the New Year (21st March)—would repeat itself each year, he ordained a festival to be celebrated on that day and named it Jamshid-i-Naoroz or Naoroos-e-Jamshidi and so this festival has been celebrated throughout the ages with great pomp to this day.

“Wine was discovered by Jamshid. He was greatly fond of grapes and to preserve them, had some placed in large jars. Later, finding them fermented and terrible to the taste, marked them poison and set them apart.

“Much later, a lady of the house in distress drank the entire contents of the jar of poison (now wine) to end her life, was overpowered and swooned. When she revived, Jamshid learnt her story and with it the secret of wine making. To this day in Iran, wine is known as Zehere-e-Khoosh (poison of delight).

“Thus the early part of Jamshid’s reign was prosperous beyond measure. But immersed in luxury, he forgot at last the source whence his good fortune flowed and proclaimed himself a god and directed his statues to be multiplied so that the Iranians might adore the image of their king as the dispenser of all earthly good.”

*“Who death subdue, and of disease the pain;
Though many kings on earth bear lordly sway,
A mortal’s death ‘tis I alone can stay.”*

This act of daring impiety drew the wrath of the Lord and disgusted his subjects and encouraged the Arabian prince, Zuhak, to invade Iran.

Zuhak ... Devil Incarnate

It was noon, the sun was high in the heavens and by now Asfandiyar had drunk deeply of wine and was quite mellowed. Rustam had also drunk well and his natural affection for the youth was greatly increased. He praised Asfandiyar’s skill with words and enquired, “This Zuhak who killed Jamshid, did he not sell his soul to the Devil? I have heard that two hydra-like snakes grew out from the two blades of his shoulders. I have always wanted to hear about him. Do you know more about this Zuhak?”

Asfandiyar got up, walked to the fire, where two wild asses lay roasting. He cut a whole side and threw it at Rustam who, without looking, stretched out a hand and caught it. Asfandiyar returned to the table with a leg in his hand and filled the empty goblets. Soon the only sign that the animals had existed were bits of bone strewn around the floor. Then between large gulps of wine Rustam again began, “This Zuhak, what do you know about him?”

Asfandiyar nodded his head and looking towards the river said, “Do you know that Satan had once tempted Zardusht with great riches?”

Rustam did not understand and looked blank and Asfandiyar smiling, continued, “Do you know, this same Satan in the guise of Arjasp also tempted my father with great riches?”

Rustam knew this and nodded his head, though things were still not clear at all to him. But as long as Asfandiyar kept talking, he was content and he tried to look interested.

The youth continued, “Satan tried to tempt my father and Zardusht and failed. Zuhak, finally, was his first victim—he was ambitious and the devil had his way. Zuhak sold his soul to the devil to become King of Iran and the world.”

Bending over his seat, and poking into the forest of bones with his long fingers, Asfandiyar pulled out one last piece with a morsel of flesh, then skinning the bone with his teeth, flicked it back onto the heap and said, “There was a good old King of Arabia called Mardas. He was a God-fearing man, and possessed great wealth. He had many cattle and thousands of fine Arabian horses, but only one son called Zuhak, brave and fearless, but impressionable and ambitious.

“One day, Satan in disguise met Zuhak, spoke sweetly, and praised his valour and wisdom and in turn made him feel that his complimenter was a man of consequence and of great worth. When the youth was completely under his influence, Satan said, “I have great knowledge and can tell you things which, if followed, will make you master of the world. But you must pledge yourself fully to me and swear your most solemn oath that you will faithfully do all that I tell you to do.” Quickly the young man swore his most solemn oath as required. Then Satan said,

*“O noted Lord, excepting Thee,
Why should a master in the palace be?
With such son, of a father what the need?”*

“At first Zuhak did not understand and when he did, he was horrified to find that he had to kill his father to fulfil his ambition. Then Satan unfolded the plan to cause the accidental death of Zuhak’s father by digging a deep pit in the garden and covering the opening with grass. The old man daily walked there, late in the night after prayers. Then Satan added, ‘For the old man encumbers the ground, and while he lives, you will remain unknown.’

“When Zuhak heard this, he was filled with grief and would have broken his oath, but Satan insisted and, finally, the trap was set for Mardas, and so it came about that the son killed the father and placed the crown upon his own head. From that time onwards, Zuhak learnt the art of black magic from Satan and so began his rule with a lot of evil and a sprinkling of good, for he was not yet wholly given up to guile.

“Now unfolded the next part of Satan’s plan and he came before Zuhak in the form of a youth and asked the king to allow him to serve as his cook. He was most persuasive and succeeded in being made the cook in the palace. So far, most of the food had been cooked from herbs and vegetables. Now flesh for the first time appeared on the palace tables. Each day, new dishes were put before him and the royal flavour for such food increased.

*“O flesh of ev’ry beast and ev’ry bird
He brought him one by one as he preferred
And like a lion nourished him with blood.
So as to make the king bold on such food.”*

“Zuhak found that the flesh gave him lion-like strength and courage, and commanded that his cook be brought before him. In his gratitude, he granted the cook a boon.

“The cook then said, ‘If the king takes pleasure in thy servant, grant that he may kiss thy shoulders.’ Now Zuhak, who feared no evil, granted the request and so the cook kissed him on his shoulders. When he had done so, the ground opened beneath his feet and covered the cook so that all men present were greatly agitated. But from the king’s shoulders sprang two hissing serpents, venomous and black. The king was afraid and commanded that they should be cut off from the root. But as often as the snakes were cut off, they grew again and in vain, the wise men and physicians cast about for a remedy.

Then Satan once again appeared, disguised as a learned man and was led before Zuhak and he spoke, saying,

*“ ‘What wast to be has been,’ the King he told,
‘Cut them not down: what is to be behold.
Now let them rest, and give them food to eat;
No other remedy the case will meet.
Save brains of men naught give ye them to eat
And they themselves will perish with this meat.’ ”*

“This was Satan’s secret plan, for if the king obeyed, through it would follow the destruction of mankind. The king followed the advice, and the serpents were daily fed the brains of men and the fear of the king became great in the land.

“Meanwhile in Iran, the world began to wither in Jamshid’s thrall, the customs of good men were forgotten, and the desires of the wicked were accomplished. Now the news came to Iran that in the land of the Arabs there reigned a man who was mighty and terrifying to his foes, and his name was Zuhak. Ahuramazda had by now removed his blessings from Jamshid and had left him to his fate, which by the laws of recompense, allowed vice to receive its own punishment. This brought a change in the kings and nobles of Iran, who had also withdrawn from Jamshid because he had rebelled against Ahuramazda. They now turned to Zuhak and proclaimed him king.

“The armies of Arabia and Persia marched against Jamshid, who fled before their face. For the space of twice fifty years, no man knew where Jamshid fled for he hid from the wrath of Zuhak. In the fullness of time, Zuhak’s servants found him as he wandered on the shores of Cathay and took him before the king, where he was treated by his cruel enemy like a common criminal. Here his miseries ended after enduring all the proud scorn which Zuhak could inflict upon the fallen greatness of Jamshid. He was placed between two boards and sawn asunder with the bone of a fish. Thus perished the throne and power of Jamshid like the grass that withers, for he had grown proud and vain and would have lifted himself above his God. Zuhak took into his harem Jamshid’s two sisters, Shehr-i-naz and Arnavaz.

“So, Zuhak sold his soul to Satan and sat upon the throne of Iran, Arabia and the countries that surrounded it and he also began to pile evil upon evil and all the people of his land cried out in despair. The king

reigned thus for the space of a thousand years and evil and vice moved boldly in the daylight and virtue was hidden in the dark of night. It seemed as if mankind must perish to still the appetite of those snakes sprung from evil, for daily two men were slaughtered to satisfy these serpents.

“Ahuramazda now saw that the people had learnt that evil would beget evil and felt it was time for Him to intervene and stop their sufferings for the sins of Jamshid. He, therefore, caused a grandson to be born to Jamshid whom his parents called Faridun.

“Now it so happened that when the babe was born, Zuhak dreamt,

*“One night he wast with Arnavaz asleep
From the king’s palace suddenly that night
He saw three warriors that came in sight.
Two older men, and one, a youth wast there.
Tall as a cypress and with kingly air.
With loins all girded and of royal grace,
He carried in his hand a bull-headed mace.
Zuhak he fierce attacked, to battle led,
And struck with ox-headed mace upon his head.”*

“Trembling, the tyrant awoke and called for his mobeds, so that they should interpret his dream. They were sorely troubled for they foresaw grave danger, and they feared foretelling the evil that would come. They were silent for a while but eventually, one who had more courage spoke and said, There will arise one named Faridun, who shall inherit your throne and reverse your fortune, and strike you down with a bull-headed mace.’ When Zuhak first heard these words, he swooned and the mobeds fled before his wrath. But when he recovered, he bade the world to be scourged for Faridun.

“Henceforth Zuhak was consumed by bitterness of spirit and knew neither rest nor joy. The mother of Faridun also lived in fear lest the king found out that her son was sprung from Jamshid’s race. So she hid him in a thick forest, where dwelt a wondrous cow named Purmayah, whose hair had the hues of a peacock’s plumes. She begged the cowherd who owned Purmayah to look after her son, and for the next three years he was reared in the woods and Purmayah was his nurse.

“By now, the mother learnt that word had reached Zuhak about a boy and Purmayah living in the woods. Fearing for her son, she took him to a pious hermit who dwelt on Mount Elbruz and asked the hermit to look after her son.

*“In sorrow from Iran’s land have I fled.
Know thou that this dear, precious child of mine
Should as the head of the assembly shine.
He should take off the crown from Zuhak’s head.
And in the dust his royal girdle tread.
Thou must his guardian and protector be.”*

“When she returned, she found that Zuhak had slaughtered the beautiful cow Purmayah and was raging like a mad elephant because the boy had fled. In his fury, he destroyed the entire forest and turned it into a desert, but Faridun was not found and Zuhak continued to live in fear and anguish.

“Now Zuhak demanded of his people that they should certify that he was a just and noble king. Out of great fear, everyone did so, except one man called Kavah, who cried from amidst the crowd and demanded justice. When brought before the king, the man smote his head with his hands and said, ‘I am Kavah, a blacksmith, a blameless man and I seek justice. It is against you, O king, that I cry out. Seventeen fair sons have I called mine, yet only one remains to me, for his brethren were slain to still the hunger of your serpents and now they have taken from me this last child also. I pray you to spare him and not heap cruelties past bearing upon the land.’

“The king feared the wrath of Kavah and seeing it was great, granted the life of his son and tried to soothe him with soft words. Then Zuhak asked him to sign the testimony that he was a just and noble king. Kavah rejected the king’s appeal and cried to all around,

*“O ye by devils hired,
By terror of an earthly king inspired,
Your faces have yet now all turned tow’rds hell.
And to its words given up your hearts as well.
I’ll not bear witness to the writing here.
Nor of this monarch have I any fear.”*

“And he seized the declaration tore it into fragments and scattered them into the air. Then he strode from the palace and the astonished nobles and people did not dare to restrain him.

“Then Kavah went to the market place and revealed the wickedness of Zuhak to the people. They were now greatly agitated and, seeing his advantage, Kavah whipped off his leather apron, fixing it to the point of a lance, raised it aloft as if it were a banner and cried,

*“In God’s trust ye who take your stand.
He partisan with Faridun who now would be
And from Zuhak’s bonds now his head would free...”*

“There was great excitement and the people gathered around Kavah, who led them out of the city with his standard raised aloft and they marched for days till they came to Faridun’s hiding place.

“By now Faridun was a youth of 16 and had just returned to his mother’s home from Mount Elbruz, his hiding place. He had lately learnt that he belonged to the race of Jamshid and was acquainted with the evils of Zuhak. Knowing his heritage, Faridun wished to attack Zuhak, but his mother calmed him and told him to bide his time. But when the great crowd came to their home, holding aloft a leather apron upon

a lance, Faridun knew his moment had come. He dressed himself in his father’s armour and put on a helmet belonging to the king, and said to his mother,

*“To battle must I now proceed;
To thee for ought but prayer there is no need.
Higher than earth does the Creator stand;
To him in ev’ry need stretch out thy hand.”*

“Before he left, he got made for himself a bull-headed iron mace and embroidered the standard of Kavah in rich brocade of Roum and decorated it with his mother’s jewels. When all this was ready, they set forth in search of Zuhak. They crossed the river Tigris near Baghdad and went on towards the city called Beitul Mukaddas (it is not known whether this is modern Mecca or Jerusalem), for the palace of Zuhak stood there.

*“Whilst Faridun at distance of a mile
Saw the king’s palace in the town the while.
The lofty hall than Saturn higher seemed.
To ravish down the stars, you would have deemed.”*

“As Faridun entered the city, the people rallied to him for all hated Zuhak and sought deliverance from him. He slew the guards at the palace gate and cast down from the walls of the palace all evil, graven talismen that he found there. Then from the harem of Zuhak, he released Jamshid’s two sisters, the tall cypress-like Shehr-i-naz and the other moon-faced Arnavaz, and they in relief cried,

*“Thou Faridun, art he
Who from all sorcery the earth shall free,
The life of Zuhak now is in thy hand.
And with thy loins’ support the world shall stand.
We two pure veiled ones of the kingly brood
Were through destruction’s fear by him subdued.
With snakes to sleep and rise up with that pair.
Such agony, O king, how could we bear?”*

“Having cleared the palace of all sinful objects, Faridun mounted the throne of the idolator and placed the crown of Iran upon his head and all people from Arabia and Iran called him king.

“Meanwhile, Zuhak returned to find Faridun upon his throne and so laid seige to the city. Faridun marched out against him with his army and the people of the city behind him. While the men and women of the city threw bricks and stones from towers and terraces, Faridun’s men shattered the Arabian army. Then came the hand-to-hand combat of Faridun and Zuhak and even as the young man raised his bullheaded mace to crush Zuhak, the blessed archangel Sraosha swooped down and cried,

“Strike not; not yet has come his time for death.”

“Then Sraosha bade the king bind the usurper and carry him far from the haunts of men, and there fasten him to a rock. And Faridun did as he was bidden and led forth Zuhak upon Mount Demavend. He bound him to the rock with mighty chains and nails driven into his hands, and left him to perish in agony. The hot sun shone down upon the barren cliffs, and there was neither tree nor shrub to shelter him. The chains cut into his flesh, and his tongue was parched with thirst. Thus after many cruel years the earth was delivered of Zuhak the evil one, and Faridun reigned in his stead.”

Faridun ... flame of hope

The story-telling mood was now upon Asfandyar. Truce for the day had been declared with Rustam and so he was relieved and felt great pleasure in the company of one of the greatest Pehlivs of Iran. He began to talk of Faridun, saying, “Faridun, for the people of Iran was the Flame of Hope. They suffered great misery under Zuhak and could carry on their daily lives only because they believed that their release at the hands of Faridun from this wretched state was ordained. And so they waited.

“Faridun ruled the country for 500 years. He was a good and just ruler and was responsible for beautifying the countryside by growing cypresses and rose gardens. After 50 years there were born to him three sons—two by Shehr-i-naz and one by Arnavaz. He did not name his sons, as he wished to see each one’s characteristics and then give them a name.

“One day as his three sons were on their way returning home, Faridun disguised himself as a fuming dragon and met them at a mountain pass in a cloud of dust, raging and angry. His eldest son threw down his spear and thought it wise to flee. The second took up his bow and arrow to fight the dragon. As he did so, the youngest sprang forward and in a bold voice said to the dragon, ‘We are the sons of Faridun, take heed before you do us harm. We are of the blood of this great warrior and if you persist, we shall destroy you.’

“Faridun felt he had tested his sons and he turned and sped back. The three boys now descended the mountain pass and entered the city gates of their father. Faridun with all his nobles and all his royal trappings stood to meet them. He had his famous bull-headed mace and the ‘apron of Kavah.’ Amidst blaring of trumpets the father greeted his three sons and took them to his palace. As they were seated about him, he turned to each one of them and said he was now ready to give each a name, explaining that he had already tested them this very morning in the disguise of a dragon. Turning to his eldest son, he named him Salam, the prudent. His second son he called Tur the courageous and his youngest he named Iraj, the gentle and the wise. Faridun gave to Salam the kingdom of Roum and Khavar, which are the lands of the setting sun. To Tur he gave Scythia (Turan) and to Iraj Iran, the last being the finest part of the inheritance.

“Faridun with his son Iraj beside him, ruled Iran well and justly and made the country beautiful, filling cities with slender cypresses and fragrant rose gardens and soon a description of Faridun’s court reached the ears of Salam and Tur:

*“A spring of Paradise, ’twas to behold,
Upon his palace heav’n found resting place,
With paradise e’er smiling on its face.”*

“Both were rulers in their own right, but Salam and Tur being jealous of their youngest brother, upbraided their father for his partiality. Iraj desired peace between brothers and went to Turan with the intention of renouncing his kingdom but was treacherously murdered by Tur, his head being severed from his body and sent in a casket to Faridun.

“There was great mourning in Iran and Faridun was beside himself with grief, till it was discovered that a slave girl, Iran-afrid, was bearing Iraj’s child. And so was born Manuchehr, a grandson to Faridun and the future King of Iran.

Manuchehr

“With all his misery and suffering, Faridun lost his vision. But as the young prince grew up, there was great rejoicing at the court of Faridun, and the Lord Ahuramazda in His mercy gave back Faridun his sight. Now happiness within the kingdom was complete. The child was brought up with the utmost care and in great splendour and there appeared at the court, Sam, the son of Nariman, one of the greatest Pehlivs in the history of Iran.

“Tur and Salam made pretensions of repentance and offered their services to Manuchehr. Faridun knew that they sought only to beguile him and sent word saying, ‘I do not believe you have any love for Manuchehr, just as you were heartless towards his father, Iraj. You have murdered his father and now that you fear his son, you would like to do the same to him. The day will come when Manuchehr will wreak his vengeance on your heads for the murder of his father.’ When they received their father’s message, there was fear in the hearts of Tur and Salam and they both decided that while their nephew was young, they should act before it was too late. They then got a great host ready for battle with Manuchehr, the grandson of Faridun. Their army was great and it spread as far as one could see and before this vast number of men rode the two brothers Salam and Tur.

“Faridun before long learnt of the movement of this mighty army and calling Manuchehr his grandson before him, ordered the boy to lead the Iranian army against his uncles. The army Faridun placed before Manuchehr was equally mighty and with him rode Karan the son of Kavah, now called the Avenger. The other great Pehliva who joined Manuchehr, was Sam the son of Nariman a great warrior. In front of this great host, Faridun had the banner of Kavah flown above them to warn his two sons of the fate that awaited them. Manuchehr was

now inspired and he spoke boldly to his men and before long had them thirsting for battle and so they marched forward towards Turan and the murderers of his father.

“The two armies met in battle at dawn. The earth was a sea of blood, and the legs of the elephants were like pillars of coral. In the fierce battle that ensued, Manucehr slew Tur and fed his body to wild beasts but the head he sent to Faridun. Salam took refuge in the fort of the Alans, which was captured by Karan and burnt down, but Salam escaped, only to be slain by Manucehr who sent his uncle’s head, fixed on a lance, to Faridun.

“Manucehr with his warriors then entered the city of Faridun in triumph and when they came to the King’s house, Faridun seated Manucehr upon a throne of gold. Then he called Sam, son of Nariman, to him and said, ‘I pray you bring up this youth and teach him the art of Government and aid him with your might and mind.’ And then continued, ‘Thanks be unto Ahuramazda the merciful who has listened to my voice, and granted the desires of His servant. For now shall I go hence, and the world will I encumber no more.’ And with this, he withdrew into solitude and daily his strength grew fainter and fainter, till the light of his life faded and Faridun vanished from the earth but his name remained.”

All this while, Rustam listened to the words of Asfandiyar. Now he smiled and spoke, “I have given ear to your voice, give ear now also to the words that I shall speak.” And Asfandiyar replied, “We have spoken enough concerning ourselves, let us drink until we be weary.” But Rustam insisted, saying, “Not so, for you have not heard about those from whom I have sprung nor of the deeds that I have done, for they are many and the ear does not suffice to hear them nor the mouth to tell. For if you know them, you would not exalt your self above me, or think to cast me into chains.” And now Rustam instead took up the tale and Asfandiyar gave him leave to speak. Rustam began, “You must well know that my illustrious father was Zal, one of the greatest heroes of Iran, whose father was Sam, yet another hero whose renown has spread throughout the land. He was the great one in whose hands and care, Faridun placed his grandson Manucehr.”

Zal and Rudabeh “**T**he Pehliva Sam was of great strength to Manucehr, but his greatest sorrow was that he was childless. Then it came to pass that a son was born to him, beautiful of face and limb, with neither fault nor blemish, save that his hair was like that of an old man. Sam was greatly distressed and angrily railed against fate. The servants were commanded to take the child and cast it forth out of the land.

“Far in the heart of our land and amidst vast tracts of forest stood the mysterious Elbruz Mountains whose peaks pierced the clouds and were surrounded by a galaxy of stars; a space on which no son of man had set foot. There, on the crest of this hallowed ground, did the Simurgh,

the bird of God, build its nest. From the forest wide, it gathered sandalwood, ebony and aloe and built itself a home befitting a regal bird and one to which no evil could reach.

“When the son of Sam, bereft and naked, was cast at the foot of these mighty mountains, the Simurgh spied this tasty morsel of flesh and swooped down and in a trice clasped the child in her talons and bore it to its young. But compassion filled her heart and she bade her young to treat this man-child as their brother and from then on fed the babe herself with choicest bits of meat softened in her mouth. And so amidst this brood of mighty birds and lofty splendour, the son of Sam grew up.

“The years went by in swift succession and the babe grew into a youth of great strength and beauty. Before long, this boy, born of a heroic clan but by fortune thrown amidst a family of regal birds, won fame by the deeds he wrought and his renown spread and reached Sam’s ears.

“Finally, Sam relented and went to the Simurgh and begged the return of his son. Zal was reluctant to go back but the Simurgh answered him saying, ‘I do not send you away out of enmity, O my son; you must to the rightful heritage return. But for the days of your need, bear these feathers from my breast. Cast one of them into the fire and I will come like a cloud to deliver you from danger.’ And so Zal returned to his father and in time was presented to Manucehr, who said to Sam, ‘O Pehliva of the world, the King requests you to take care of this noble youth, and guard him for the land of Iran, and teach him forthwith the arts of war.’

“It came about that Zal desired to see the kingdom and he set forth towards Cabul. Now it so happened that Mehrab, who was descended from Zuhak the serpent, reigned in Cabul. Yet he was worthy, prudent and wise. When he heard that the son of Sam, to whom he paid tribute, was near the city, he went out to meet him, bearing costly gifts. But Zal did not enter the city of Cabul, as he felt the King and his father would be angered.

“Not long after, Mehrab visited his Queen and her daughter Rudabeh and his mind being full of Zal, his royal visitor, said to his wife, “O my Queen, this man Zal is verily a Prince—a warrior with the strength of an elephant and regal as a lion. Even the white hair on his young head makes him look all the more gracious.’ When Rudabeh heard these words, her heart burnt with love for Zal and in time Zal heard of the beauty of Rudabeh through one of her slaves.

*“Pomegranate blooms her cheeks, lips cherry hue,
And on her silver breast pomegranates two.
Her two eyes like the mead’s narcissus glow,
Their lashes darker than the black-winged crow,
Eyebrows resembling an embroidered bow,
Fringed with the purest musk the tuz below.”*

“His curiosity was roused and he longed to behold this fair one. Rudabeh’s slave returned home and told her of Zal, his beauty and of his prowess. With both the young people wishing to see each other, and the slave girl acting as messenger, there came a day when Zal beheld the daughter of the king standing upon the roof and her beauty was like a cypress on which the full moon shines. And when she saw him, she said, ‘I welcome you, O young man, son of a hero, and may the blessing of Heaven rest upon you.’ And Zal answered her benison and prayed that they might converse, for he was on the ground and she was on the roof. Then from the battlement Rudabeh cried,

*“O athlete, sprung from warrior in his pride,
Quickly thy loins extend and upright stand,
Stretch forth thy lion form, thy royal hand.
Now hold fast of my ringlets by the end;
’Twere meet that I my locks to thee should lend.
It is for this that I my hair have grown.”*

“Then the pari-faced Princess loosened her tresses. They were long and lustrous and in the moonlight they unravelled and fell, in a cascading brilliance over the battlements and to the ground. And again she cried, ‘O Pehliva, for you alone I have grown these locks and for just this moment. Pray, clasp this black silken cord of mine and support, yourself with it and mount the wall.’ But Zal cried, ‘Not so, O my fair beauty, my lovely one, such ungracious use of your beauty, I cannot commit.’ Instead he found a cord, made a slip knot, raised himself upto the battlements and with a light spring, placed himself besides her. Together, hand in hand Rudabeh and her new-found love stepped down into her luminous chamber and her rapt slaves surrounded them. But this matchless pair of lovers were oblivious to their presence for each could only drink in the beauty of the other and their eyes sparkled with their boundless love.

“The hours flew by, and their hearts pounded with a love that grew endlessly. Soon light appeared in the sky, making the chandeliers within the room pale and insignificant, but this brought a care to the lover’s mind and prompted Zal to say, ‘O my musk-perfumed and fairylike love, when news of this reaches my home, my king will be angered and my father grieved. But to you I pledge my solemn word that even if all were gathered together against me, I shalt take you for wife, for life without you would be vile and empty for me. This I swear to heaven.’ And Rudabeh swore likewise to be faithful to this man, who but a short while ago was a stranger.

“Then trumpet sounds and drum beats from the city gates rent the air, announcing the arrival of dawn and though the young couple prayed to the glorious sun to delay its advent, its progress was relentless and soon it was the moment to part. Now Zal approached his father and told him of his love for Rudabeh and let it be known the oath he had taken to marry the maiden. So Sam sent back word, ‘I hold your passion folly, O my son, but because of the oath that I have sworn to you,

it shall be done at your desire. I will go to Iran and lay your suit before the king.’

“Then Sam with his army set forth for Iran. Meanwhile, Sindokht, the mother of Rudabeh heard of what had passed between her daughter and Zal and informed her husband Mehrab. Both were filled with fear of the king’s wrath.

“Manuchehr was greatly incensed as he feared this union would bring evil upon Iran and he ordered Sam to hasten to Cabul and destroy the habitations of King Mehrab and all his people. When Zal heard this, he was angry and went forth to meet his father and reminded him of his oath and desired that he spare the land of Cabul. Sam listened with a heavy heart and said, ‘From the day you were born, I have been unjust to you my son, and can see the justice of your words. Hold your anger for a while and I shall find a way to see that your wishes are fulfilled. You must go and see the king and take with you a letter that I shall write. I am sure, when he sees and hears you, his heart will melt and will listen to your needs.’

“Sam wrote a long letter to the king and in this letter he mentioned of his great deeds, how he had subdued the enemies of Iran, how he had enlarged the frontiers of his country and saved it from destruction by killing the dragon that had invaded Iran. He pointed out to the king that he was now an old man and he hoped that his son, who was a brave man would follow in his footsteps and defend the king’s frontiers. He, however, found the boy devoured by love and was worried that his son would lose his mind, if he would not permit him to marry the girl of his choice. He therefore asked the king to have compassion on his son and let him marry the daughter of Mehrab. Zal was overjoyed with his father’s letter and with the blessings of his God and his father, he left for Iran.

“Zal took with him the cream of his army. Meanwhile, Mehrab was tortured with fear of the wrath of Manuchehr and lamented before his Queen, telling her that she and her daughter had brought destruction upon them and their country and stated, ‘I have only one recourse left to me. I will take Rudabeh to his court and before his eyes destroy her. Maybe this is the only sacrifice which may stem the flood of the king’s anger.’

“Sindokht listened to the king’s words and remained silent. But her nimble mind looked around for some ruse to avert the fate which threatened them. Then a thought struck her and she begged her husband Mehrab to permit her to go to Sam and plead their case. To strengthen her plea she would take with her gifts worthy of a great king.

“Mehrab agreed to her plan, for fear broke down his defences and he knew she was always resourceful. With a mighty caravan which any great prince would deem an honour to accompany, Sindokht set forth to the court of Sam. Slaves with treasures untold, perfume, musk,



THE CARAVAN FROM CABUL

camphor and incense, rubies, turquoise and priceless gems, silks of Chin, brocades of Rourm and satins of Ind—every treasure of great value, she emptied from her husband's treasury, and piled them onto elephants, dromedaries, camels and horses, till the line of her caravan stretched to the horizon in a never-ending stream from the gates of Mehrab's city.

"When Sindokht arrived at the palace gates of Sam, she bade the guardian to tell him that an envoy from the court of Cabul had come to pay respect to him. When she was before him, she boldly bowed and kissed the ground at his feet and called down the blessings of the Lord profusely on his head. Then began the parade of her gifts before Sam. He was bewildered and overwhelmed by the magnitude of the treasures now piled before him and could not understand why a country that could boast of sending such treasures as gifts, would send a woman for an envoy. Besides, he was in two minds about accepting such largesse, as he was torn between his king and his son.

"Finally, he was won over and, smiling, said, 'Place these riches in my son's treasury.' This for Sindokht was the first sign of victory. The first obstacle had been breached and this made her bold to state, 'O Pehliva, see in what esteem and love my country holds you and yours. What enmity is there between us that we hear the King of Kings in his wrath has ordered you to destroy us?' But Sam was no simple man; he had his own questions to ask and instead parried, Tell me first, who are you, a slave or the wife of Mehrab, for no simple envoy could come with such untold wealth as you have brought. Tell me, are you the one whose daughter has robbed my son Zal of his senses?' Then Sindokht begged and pleaded with her woman's wiles and said, 'Nay, grant me first on your honour and your word that you will spare the lives of my loved ones and I shall tell you all that is within my heart, keeping no secrets.'

"Sam, man that he was, soon beguiled by her boldness and her charm, succumbed and taking her hand in his, swore an oath that all would be safe. When she was assured of this, she admitted to being the Queen of Cabul and recounted in full the great love that had grown between their children. She did not fail to add that though they were of the race of Zuhak, her husband had proved himself to be a valiant and good king. His people dearly loved him and would fight to the last any that would seek to destroy their lord and liege. Sam, now fully conquered and smiling said, 'Rest your heart. I, Sam, Pehliva of the world, have promised you that Zal shall wed your daughter Rudabeh and none shall be harmed.' Sindokht had come on a desperate mission which had succeeded beyond belief and as she bade farewell, her heart knew great joy and she left loaded with gifts from Sam.

"Meanwhile, Manuchehr was greatly disturbed to read Sam's letter and said to Zal, 'I see that your father, Sam, is grieved and his sorrow opens an old wound in me and so for the sake of my faithful servant, I will fulfil your desire. You must however, spend a few days with me so that I can learn something more about you.'



THE ENVOY AND SAM

"The king called for his mobeds and asked them to look into the future and tell him what the fate held in store for this son of Sam. For three days and nights, the mobeds looked into the Heavens and finally they came forward with great news. They hailed the union of the son of Sam with the daughter of Mehrab and claimed that a Great Warrior would be born to these two, who would become the Avenging arm of the King of Iran and the protector of the weak and the scourge of the wicked.

"When the king heard this, he charged the mobeds that they keep secret what they had revealed to him. And he called for Zal that he might question and test his wisdom. The wise men and the mobeds were seated in a circle and they put numerous questions to Zal who replied adroitly. The king was glad and the assembled mobeds were amazed and lauded the son of Sam. Then when morning came, Zal prayed that the king would dismiss him. But Manuchehr insisted that he must test Zal also in feats of strength and for some days Zal proved his valour and his strength against the other Pehlivas of the country.

"When Manuchehr's court saw the gallant deeds of Zal they were overjoyed and the king loaded him with gifts. He then replied to Sam. He wrote, 'I am greatly pleased with your son Zal. He is a worthy son of a worthy father. I, therefore, give my full consent to his marriage. May God give you happiness my Great Pehliva Sam.'

"Zal left for his home and his father, in great happiness. When he came before his father and delivered the king's letter, the years fell off the old man and joy flooded his face. A swift messenger was sent forth to Mehrab to announce the arrival of Sam and his son Zal and to bear the glad tidings of the king's approval of Zal and Rudabeh's marriage. The city of Cabul blossomed with banners, bunting and silken standards of brilliant hues; the sounds of trumpets, drums, harps and cymbals filled the air; Rudabeh was overjoyed with the happy tidings and made the palace a place resembling paradise.

"Mehrab and his nobles went forth from the bedecked city of Cabul to meet his honoured guest. He placed a crown of diamonds upon the head of Zal, who had come to the city in great triumph, and people crowded the streets to honour Zal and his father. The Queen met them at the palace door and poured out musk and precious stones at their feet. Then Sam responded to their homage and asked to see their daughter Rudabeh, and Sindokht replied, 'What will you give me to see the sun?' Then Sam said, 'All that you want, even my slaves and my throne, will I give to you.'

"Then Sindokht led Sam to the house and raised a curtain of heavy silk and satin and there upon a golden couch sat Rudabeh, dressed in gold brocade and silk of the finest weave, with jewellery and turquoise of great worth. But all this finery was as naught before the delicate beauty and grace of Rudabeh. Musk and perfume filled the air but Sam had no word or thought for anything, and was amazed by the girl's beauty which he had not envisaged even in his dreams.



RUDABEH

“The alliance was quickly concluded between Sam and Mehrab, according to the customs and laws, and the two lovers soon found themselves seated upon a throne, listening to the never-ending list of gifts that Mehrab read out. Then for seven days the city of Cabul was given to feasting and merriment. A month later, Zal returned to Seistan with his bride. Before long, Sam set forth to battle, leaving the kingdom in the able hands of his son. Rudabeh sat on the throne beside him, wearing a golden crown placed on her head by her husband.”

There was great pride and pleasure in the eyes of Rustam as he concluded the story of his father and mother. He took a deep draught of wine, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and placed the goblet with a loud bang on the table that set it quivering and looking across at Asfandiyar said, “Now I shall tell you about the birth of the greatest champion of the world, a man whose deeds have filled the glorious chapters of the history of Iran, a man whose deeds even the angels of heaven will sing. This man am I, Rustam, the son of Zal, the son of Sam, the son of Nariman, heroes all of Iran. A mighty brood of men, the likes of which the world will never see again.” Asfandiyar smiled, enraptured, and waited expectantly for the story that was to come. He had forgotten by now the goblet of wine that stood beside him, untouched. Rustam then began to speak.

Rustam **“Before** I was born, my dear mother, Rudabeh, was afflicted sorely and neither by day or night could she find rest. Then my illustrious father Zal remembered the Simurgh, that gracious nurse, his foster mother, and he took a feather given to him by this mighty bird and cast it into the fire. In a trice, a sound of rushing wind, a tremendous flapping of wings and lo! before him stood the bird of God, darkening the sky above. In a gentle voice she said to Zal, ‘O my son, why are you troubled and why are the eyes of this lion wet with tears?’ Then Zal told her of his sorrow and she bade him be of good cheer, ‘For verily your nurse who shielded and reared you when your father cast you out, has come yet again to your succour.’ She then told Zal that it was necessary to make a cut in the side of his wife’s womb, but first he should put her to sleep with a magic potion, which she gave him, along with a balm. She said, ‘After the cut is made and the babe is released, sew the wound together, dress and anoint it with this balm and then rub one of my feathers over it. The wound will heal thereof.’

“Zal did as he was directed, and as a giant babe came out from the womb of its mother, she exclaimed ‘Ba-Rastam’—I am relieved. When my mother Rudabeh beheld the babe, she said. ‘Verily he shall be called Rustam, for I am delivered of my pain.’ And all the land was glad that a mighty son was born to Zal, the hero and the sounds of feasting and joy were heard throughout its breadth. Then a fleet of messengers brought the happy tidings to Sam. And they bore with them my image sewn of silk, whereon were traced the features of a lion’s whelp with a

club in its hands mounted upon a dromedary. Great was the joy of Sam, my grandfather, when he beheld me. He poured largesse before the messengers and thanked the Lord that he had suffered his eyes to look upon his grandchild.

“When I was eight years old, my grandfather, the great Pehliva Sam learnt that I was a handsome and mighty youth already. He, therefore, came to Zubulistan with a large army to look at his grandson. I rode forth on a war elephant to greet him and when I beheld my father’s father, I fell on my knees and called for his blessings. And he blessed me, this son of Zal. Then I spoke to this mighty warrior and said, ‘O Pehliva, my courage stems from you and the day will not be long before I smite thine enemy. All I need is a valiant horse, a fine saddle and a good armour. My courage from you I already have, so lead me to battle, for feast and food are not for me.’

“When he heard these words, he was astonished and blessed me yet again. Now, when two springs had passed, I was awakened from my slumber by a mighty roaring that shook the walls of the house to the very foundation. A cry went forth that the king’s white elephant had broken its chain in fury, and the inmates of the house were in danger. When I learnt of it, I sprang from my bed, and desired of the guards that they should suffer me to pass to the courtyard that I might conquer the beast. But the guards barred the way, saying, ‘How can we answer for it before the king, if you run into danger?’ I pushed them aside and forced a passage for myself and with my bare arms and mighty fists, I broke down the door and gave the beast a single crushing blow and slew it.

“Then many moons passed and my grandfather Sam, the Pehliva, died, as also Manuchehr. A number of kings of Iran lost their throne and old age was creeping up on my father Zal. The time had now come for me to go forth into the world and protect the weak and defend my countrymen against attacks from invaders. But first I had to find a suitable steed, fleet of foot, strong of back and bold of heart, to partner me in my adventures. My father had already given me the mighty mace of Sam.

“All the horses of Zubulistan and Cabul were one day brought before me and though I tested each steed and went through weeks looking for a suitable one, I found none. One day, I perceived in the midst of some horses of Cabul a mare, mighty and strong, followed by a colt with the chest and shoulders of a lion; in strength it seemed like an elephant and in colour it was as rose leaves that have been scattered upon a saffron ground. The mare attacked me like a furious elephant, but I gave vent to a deafening roar, stunning her with fright and with a powerful belt sent her trembling back to the herd. I then tested the colt with my eyes, made a running knot in my cord, threw it about the beast and caught it in my snare. I knew that this was the horse I was looking for and named it ‘Rakush’ (Lightning), even before I swung myself on its back. I asked one of the keepers the price of the dragon, but he

replied, 'If you are Rustam, mount him and retrieve the sorrows of Iran, for his price is the land of Iran and, seated upon him, you will save the world.'

"From that moment onwards, I have placed my life and my right arm in the service of your forefathers. I have fought for glorious Kai Kobad and rescued his son Kai Kavus, when he foolishly waged war within the land of Mazinderan, the abode of the white Divs. I have fought besides Saiawush and helped Kai Khusru revenge himself on Afrasiab for the murder of your great grandfather. In all the glorious moments of Iran, my illustrious father Zal and I have played no small a part. Time is too short for me to say more. I have no doubt that you, Asfandiyar, have knowledge of my heroic deeds. So, let us begin feasting."

And they did so, and ate and drank until the night was far spent, and all men were amazed at Rustam's hunger. Now when it was time for him to depart, he prayed Asfandiyar yet again that he would be his guest, and yet again Asfandiyar refused saying, "Suffer that I put chains about you, and lead you forth to Iran that Vishtaspa be satisfied. But if you will not submit, I must attack you with the spear."

These words distressed Rustam and he perceived that no good could come from this foul combat. If he were to slay this youth, he would tarnish the honour of his house, for how could he raise hands against his king and master and do evil to the king's blood? And yet, he was Rustam, the Pehliva of the world, whom none had vanquished. How then could he be led in chains by this callow youth? This stain could never be wiped out and men would mock him. There was no way but to talk Asfandiyar out of combat.

Rustam, therefore, raised his voice and called to him, "I beg of you, talk not of chains and the like, for this is evil talk and can only lead to disaster. I cannot understand how your father could have sent you against the might of Rustam, whom none has vanquished. I am the champion of your forefathers. Come feast with me and let us ride forth in friendship to Iran."

But Asfandiyar replied, "Old man, you waste your breath, for my father's orders cannot be lightly regarded. Prepare yourself for combat, for I see no other way and tomorrow you must come with me in chains or accept death."

Rustam's wrath was roused and he said scornfully, "O callow youth, when I stand with my mace before you, you will learn that no man has stood before me for long and it is more likely that you must prepare for your end." Here Bashutan remonstrated on Rustam's behalf but Asfandiyar would not have it and cried, "He bars my path to the throne and my crown, and I will not have it. Strive not to hinder me, for I am resolved to rule Iran. The good Zardusht has always cautioned me to carry out all my king's behests or suffer the pains of hell. I am grieved

that I must hurt Rustam but my father has commanded me to bring Rustam in chains and I must obey him." Then Bashutan sighed and said, "Alas! you have lost control of your mind" and stood aside.

When Rustam went into his house, he called for his leopard skin, his helmet of Roud, his spear of Ind and the war garb of Rakush to be brought before him and when he saw them he wept and cried, "I now face the hardest fight of my life. I have to destroy the son of my king or lose face in the sight of all men for all time to come."

All night Rustam did not sleep as he was grieved and restless. At dawn, he dressed for battle, but he had resolved to once again try and talk Asfandiyar out of this foolhardy fight. Before dawn he was at Asfandiyar's camp and called out to him loudly, "O Asfandiyar, the man you would do battle with is here and you still sleep. Awake and get ready to fight Rustam, the Pehliva of the world."

In a trice Asfandiyar came out from his tent as he was ready and armed for the fight. Rustam then dropped his voice and with a smile came forward entreating Asfandiyar not to go forward with the combat as both realised it was wrong, he added, "If you thirst for excitement, let our men do battle and so quench your feelings," but Asfandiyar cut him short, "You are armed to fight, stop this foolish talk and let us fight."

Rustam sighed and readied himself for combat. Asfandiyar lunged forward with his lance and there began a fight of two great heroes equal in valour and strength. The fight went on all day. When their lances were bent, they turned to their maces until their shields were dented and their helmets were in shreds. The dust and the storm of battle filled the valley and when evening came, there was no end. Both weary and sore, they rested on the banks of the river.

Meanwhile, a fight had taken place between the warriors of Asfandiyar and Rustam, and two of Asfandiyar's younger sons were killed by Zuarah and Faramurz. When Bahman rushed in to inform Asfandiyar, great was his anger and he poured forth reproaches on Rustam's head, though Rustam disavowed the slaughter and promised to deliver the two offenders to Asfandiyar for punishment. But the aggrieved father only taunted Rustam, telling him that this was like avenging a peacock by killing the serpents, and now the fight was renewed with great ferocity. The arrows of Asfandiyar cried for vengeance, whizzed through the air and fastened to Rustam and his steed. Twice thirty arrows did Asfandiyar thus send forth, until Rakush seemed as if he would perish from his wounds. Rustam also was covered with gore, and no man before this had ever harmed his body. But Rustam's arrows had done no ill to Asfandiyar because Zardusht had charmed his body against all danger, so that it was like brass.

The bitter shades of destiny

At last, Asfandiyar saw Rustam stagger and so called to the great one to surrender. But Rustam was undaunted and cried, "Not so, I shall meet you again in combat tomorrow," and with a bound was away swimming across the Hiramand. Asfandiyar was amazed as he was sure the Pehliva was grievously wounded. Taunts rose to Asfandiyar's lips but his heart was not behind his words as Rustam swam away.

Rustam's parents were filled with woe when he got home, as he had never returned wounded so grievously before. Even Rakush was dying. Zal immediately took the Simurgh's feather and cast it into the fire and immediately with a loud noise and the flapping of wings the Simurgh appeared crying. "O my son, what is come about that you call upon your nurse who shielded you." Then Zal told her all, how Rustam and Rakush were wounded and dying.

The die is cast Zal immediately took the Simurgh to Rustam and his wounded horse and moving up close to them, the Simurgh passed her wing over the two and forthwith they were whole again. She then questioned Rustam as to why he sought battle with the king's son and told him that it would not fare well with Rustam even if he defeated Asfandiyar and said, "It is written that whosoever sheds the blood of Asfandiyar will henceforth live in misery and sorrow. So come if you will and I will show you how to destroy this prince, but you will have to pay a heavy price for it. It will be wiser not to do battle with him." Then the Simurgh led Rustam to the sea coast and into a garden wherein grew a tamarisk, tall and strong, rising right into the clouds. She then advised him to break off a long branch and make of it a slender arrow.

As she showed him the way back she cautioned Rustam, "This battle that you seek is wrong, try to undo it, failing which, you have the weapon which can kill Asfandiyar. You must shoot the arrow clean between his eyes and the prince will die." With these sombre words the Simurgh left Rustam.

When dawn broke, Asfandiyar bathed in the crystal clear waters of the Hiramand and prayed to the Lord Ahuramazda to help him do that which was right. As he dressed for battle, he left Zardusht's talisman around his neck and placed it not around his wrist, as on the first day.

That morning Rustam arrived earlier than was expected and lifting his voice cried out, "O man, eager to fight, why do you sleep when I, Rustam, stand before you?" Asfandiyar heard the Pehliva's voice and saw that it was truly Rustam who stood there, he was amazed, and said to his nobles, "How can this be, for Rustam surely was grievously wounded last evening?" But to Rustam he cried, "Make ready for combat, for this day you shall not escape my might. May your name perish from off the earth!"



RUSTAM - THE WARLORD

Then Rustam answered, “I have come today to parley with you and not to fight. I entreat you again, I have done great deeds for Iran and your forefathers and you must cast out this hatred for me from your heart. Come, be my guest and later let us ride together to Iran and I shall make peace and amends with your father, but let us not fight this evil combat today.”

Asfandyar was angered and he stormed at the older man crying, “Choose between chains and combat, I have no wish for further discussion. I will not quit the paths of God and do wrong and disobey my father. Make your choice.”

Destiny When Asfandyar had so spoken, Rustam knew that further speech was of no avail. He sighed and called upon God to witness his act and made ready for combat. As instructed by the Simurgh, he remained perfectly calm, pushed aside all feelings of anger, then drew forth the tamarisk arrow and let it fly towards his enemy. It pierced the eye of the young prince, who fell upon the mane of his steed and his blood reddened the field of battle. Rustam in pain cried out, “The bitter harvest you have sown has borne fruit.”

Asfandyar in his agony swooned and fell to the ground. His brother Bashutan and his son Bahman came to his help and found him dying. Asfandyar called for Rustam, who was now kneeling beside the wounded prince and cried, “I have one last wish, I would like you, Rustam, to carry out. You are one man I honour most, next to Zardusht. I know full well it is not your hand that has struck me down, the responsibility lies at my father Vishtaspa’s door. God will deal with him, for you are only the instrument of fate. Listen carefully, my time is short. I want my son Bahman raised in the land of Zubulistan. I entrust him, Rustam, to your care, teach him to be a warrior and a king. When the moment is ripe, see that he attains his rightful place, which is the throne of Iran. Promise me this and my soul will depart in peace.”

And Rustam swore that this last desire would be fulfilled. Then Asfandyar bade him prepare to depart, comforted his son, and sent greetings to his mother and to his wives who were in Iran. He sent a message to his father that henceforth he need not fear him beside the throne and, cursing Vishtaspa, he said that the king had done that which was worthy of his black soul. He bade them say fearlessly before the throne, “We shall meet again before the Judge, and we shall speak, and listen to His decree.” Then he told Rustam, “You have done this deed by the arts of magic.” And Rustam agreed, “It is true, for you would not listen to me, and I could not bend my spirit unto chains.”

And Asfandyar replied, “I hold no anger against you. You have done that which you could not alter, for it was written in the stars and surely that

which is written in the stars is accomplished.” And so Rustam said, “God is my witness that I strove to turn you from your resolve.”

To which Asfandyar replied, “I know.” When he had spoken, he sighed and made to open his collar. Thinking that the young man was suffocating, Rustam hastily undid his armour and his collar and there around Asfandyar’s throat still sparkled the silver chain of Zardusht. Then realization smote Rustam, for no matter how harshly spoken were the words of his opponent, he was only carrying out the cruel orders of his father, for his heart had not been in the fight. He knew now that in the final moment Asfandyar had not worn the chain around his swordarm and called upon himself the protection of Zardusht and the strength of Ahuramazda behind his fist. As Rustam looked at the blood-stained face before him, the young warrior smiled faintly and with great will he whispered, “I came not to make war. . . .” and his strength failed him and without completing his words the sun of that noble prince set.

Large tear-drops welled into the Pehliva’s eyes and flowed down his cheeks and a mighty anguish swept through him, as he folded to his bosom the limp body of his dead prince. Mighty spasms of grief convulsed him and he wept as he had done only once before at the loss of his son Suhrab.

Great lamentation filled both armies and all bewailed the fallen hero, and Rustam prayed to God for his soul, and said, “May your enemies reap that which they have sown.” Then he made ready for Asfandyar a coffin of iron, and had it lined with brocade and silken stuffs, and laid there the body of his young prince. It was placed upon the back of a dromedary and forty others followed in its wake, and all the army of Asfandyar came after them, clad in robes of mourning. Bashutan marched at the head of the train, leading Asfandyar’s horse, its saddle was reversed, and its mane and tail were shorn. From its sides hung the armour of the gallant prince and weeping resounded through the ranks as the army returned to Iran.

But Rustam remained in Zubulistan, and kept Bahman with him. When Vishtaspa learnt the tidings of woe, he was bowed down to the earth with sorrow, and remorse came upon him and he strewed dust upon his head and humbled himself before God.

Darkness had fallen over the castle of Rustam; the heartbreak and weeping of grown men, women and warriors gave way to the silent gloom of night. Some distant wolf on the high hills, surrounding the countryside now gave lip to the wail and mourning, and, as if it were a call, the cry was taken up from hill to hill, till it seemed that all the birds and animals that lived made known to the world their grief. Even the war elephants and horses in their stables, stamped in distress and trumpeted and neighed in sorrow, at the loss of this gallant prince of

The Lament

Iran. That night, no heart could suppress the pain that wrenched all, high and low, man and animal.

In this gloom sat Rustam in his great banquet hall with his new-found son, Bahman, brought to him by stark tragedy. The fire crackled and hissed in the hearth and sorrowfully Rustam looked at the clear-cut face of the youth whom this day his hand had orphaned.

The crucifixion within his soul was great and the face of Bahman before him brought greater poignancy to the happenings of that day. Memory stirred and he remembered how he had slain, as today, another brave warrior in the flush of his youth—his own son. No doubt, unknowingly, but this had not stemmed the flow of blood nor stopped the ebbing away of that young life. As if to hurt himself more, he delved into the thoughts of the time when a father slew his son. With the gouging of his old wound, he tried to allay his conscience. Now a great turbulence arose within him and brought forth a torrent of words describing that dark tragedy in his life to the young man before him. Rustam began:

**Rustam
and Suhrab**

“It came about that on a certain day, I arose from my couch and my mind was full of foreboding. I thought to myself therefore, to go out to the chase and on to the borders of Turan. I followed the hunt even towards the city of Samangan and when I came near a herd of wild asses, I caught and slew one and roasted it for my meal. When it was eaten and the bone broken for the marrow, I laid me down to slumber and Rakush cropped the pasture. When I awoke, Rakush was no longer there and I was alone in the wilderness. I was greatly distressed and set out to follow the tracks of my lost steed and so arrived at the gates of Samangan.

“I demanded to see the king and when he saw my wrath, he spoke soft words and begged me to enter his house, saying, ‘Surely Rakush cannot be hid and I shall find him for you.’ My suspicion was cast from my mind and I entered the king’s house, feasted and beguiled the hours with wine.

“When night had fallen, I slumbered on a couch perfumed with musk and roses. The star of morning was high in the arc of heaven when the door of my chamber opened and a murmur of soft voices drifted in from the threshold. A slave came within bearing a lamp perfumed with amber and a woman whose beauty was veiled came after her. As she moved, musk was scattered from her robes. The women came near my bed where I slept heavily drugged with wine. I was amazed when I saw them. Stirring from my sleep, I said, ‘Who are you, and what is your name and your desire? What do you seek from me in the dark night?’

“Softly from the lips of the Pari-faced a mellow voice spoke, ‘Tahminah, the daughter of the King of Samangan, stands before you. No living man has seen my face, nor any prince has been found worthy of my

hand. Since the day I’ve heard of mighty Rustam and his deeds of valour, my heart beats only for him and my soul is restless within me. Your renown and exploits are living memories for me. Each day I anxiously call for and learn of your fresh heroics.

“I know of your gigantic meals and that whole animals are devoured by you at one sitting. When you stand with your sword unsheathed, men cringe before you and even eagles shun their prey and dare not swoop down upon them, till your dust, as you depart, is seen upon the horizon. These things and more I could recount to you and my heart has yearned to look upon your face.

“Now Gracious God in His mercy has led you to my father’s home and I am here to say that I am yours if you will have me and, if you will not, then I will marry no other man. O noble Pehliva, see how I’ve thrown all maidenly discretion to the winds! In my anguish and my love for you, mine understanding is lost, hoping, peradventure, God will grant to me a son like you for strength and valour, to whom shall be given the empire of the world. And if you will listen to me, I will lead forth before you Rakush, and I will place at your feet the land of Samangan.’

“While this moon of beauty was yet speaking, I regarded her and saw that she was fair, and that she was wise. When I heard of Rakush, my spirit was decided within me, and I held that my adventure could not end save gloriously.

“When the sun arose and it was light, I sent a mobed to the king and demanded the hand of Tahminah in marriage. The king rejoiced and soon an alliance according to the custom was confirmed.

“When I was alone with my Pari-faced Tahminah, I took from my arm an onyx that was known to all the world and gave it to her, saying, ‘Cherish this jewel, and if Heaven cause you to give birth to a daughter, fasten it within her locks, and it will shield her from evil; but if it be granted to you to bring forth a son, fasten it upon his arm, that he may wear it like his father. And he shalt be strong as Nariman, of stature like Sam, and of grace of speech like Zal, my father.’

“And so many months were spent in idyllic splendour and the love between my beauteous Tahminah and me was great and my joy knew no bounds. Some days later, my beloved Rakush was brought before me. My world was now complete and from then on, I could feel nothing but joy in the arms of my fair wife.

“After many months had passed, I felt the hour had come for me to return and I opened my arms and embraced Tahminah, the fair of face, and I bathed her cheek with my tears and covered her hair with kisses.

Tahminah

Then I flung myself upon Rakush, and the swift-footed one bore me quickly out of Tahminah's sight. Tahminah was exceedingly sorrowful and I too was filled with sad thoughts as I turned back to Zubulistan. I pondered this adventure in my heart, but spoke to no man what I had seen and done.

“When nine moons had run their course, there was born to Tahminah a son in my likeness, a smiling babe, wherefore men called him Suhrab. And when he was but one month old, he looked like a child of twelve. When he was five years, he was skilled in arms and all the arts of war, and when ten years rolled above his head, there was none in the land who could resist him in the games of strength. Then the boy went before his mother, spoke daring words and said, ‘Since I am taller and stouter than my peers, teach unto me my race and lineage, and what I should say when men ask me the name of my sire. But if you refuse to answer my demands, I will strike you out from the rolls of the living.’

“When Tahminah beheld the impatience in her son, she remembered her own wild spirit and the way she had won her own man that moonlit night, ten years ago. This fire within her son was born of her flesh and she cried, ‘Hark my little one, my son, rejoice, for you are the seed descended from a race of Pehlivas! You are the offspring of Rostam, the son of Zal, and Nariman and Sam are your grandfathers. The world has not seen the likes of such men and your father, Rostam, is the mightiest of them all.’

“With great pride she then showed her son jewels and intricate heirlooms made of gold sent to her by me on his birth, as also a letter written by me. Then she said, ‘These are your heritage, for you to honour and cherish with gratitude, for they come from your father. Always remember, O my son, that it will be wise for you to keep silent about these matters, as Turan is under the yoke of Afrasiab and he is your father's enemy. If perchance he learns that you are your father's son, he will without fail destroy you. I also fear in my heart that if your father learns that you are already a grown man and a warrior to boot, he surely will call you hence unto him and I cannot bear this thought. For these reasons and my great love for you, I have kept silent all these years.’

“Suhrab failed to sense the pain in his mother, conscious only of his desire to leave her and spoke thoughtlessly. ‘My renown cannot be hidden and sooner or later, friends and foes will learn of my exploits. I rejoice to learn of my noble birth and it hurts me that you have been silent so long. I must hasten to collect an army of Turkomans to wrest the crown of Iran from the Kaiyanides for my father and you will sit beside him as the Queen of Iran and Samangan.

“As regards Afrasiab, have no fear of him, for once I have conquered Iran, I shall destroy this enemy of my father and shall take for myself the throne of Turan. I am now impatient for the battlefield and must find myself a horse that will be the equal of my father's, for the world will soon behold my exploits.’ So his mother gave him a foal sired by

Rakush and retained by her for this very day. Suhrab was greatly pleased with his steed and he now began to collect an army with the help of his grandfather and his mother, to enable him to march against Iran. Unknown to me, Afrasiab, hearing of Suhrab, sent Homan and Barman further to excite him to war, in the hope that my son by the hands of fate would find himself in battle against me and thereby destroy his father.

“With the army Homan and Barman had brought with them, Suhrab marched to the White Castle (Duj-i-Safid) belonging to Iran and defended by Hajir. Hajir was defeated, but Gurdafid, daughter of this old Iranian warrior, disguised herself as a warrior and came out to battle with Suhrab and delayed him. Meanwhile the fortress was quickly evacuated through secret passages from within. The girl managed to escape and Suhrab entered the empty fortress.

“At this time, the good King Kavus sent me a message calling upon me to help him remove the Turanian invaders from our soil and, as always in the history of Iran, we, the sons of Nariman, rallied to the call of our King and Iran. Before long the two armies of Iran and Turan, as in many times past, were face to face. I had heard a great deal about this young man Suhrab (at this time I still did not know he was my son, as I believed my Suhrab was still a boy and with his mother). Wishing to find out more about him, I disguised myself as a Turkoman and entered the castle in secret and came within the chamber where Suhrab held his feast. Now when I looked upon the boy, I saw that he was like a tall cypress of good sap, and that his arms were sinewy and strong like the flanks of a camel and his stature was that of a hero. I saw that around him stood brave warriors and slaves with golden bugles who poured wine before them. Tahminah had sent her brother Zindah-razm so that he might point out Suhrab to his father if we met. As fate would have it, I did not recognise him as his back was to me. As I watched from my place of concealment, Zindah-razm espied a watcher and he strode towards the place where I hid and called out, ‘Who are you? Come forth unto the light that I may behold your face.’

“But before he could speak further, I struck him and laid him dead upon the ground. You must understand that due to his mother's fears and the wily, scheming Afrasiab, I did not know that Suhrab was my son and in the dark when Zindah-razm called, I thought him to be only a curious Turkoman. Later, I learnt that the only one who could have saved the tragedy met his end at my hands. When Suhrab saw that Zindah-razm had gone out, he asked his slaves why he had not returned to the banquet. So they went forth to seek him and when they found him lying in his blood, they came and told Suhrab what they had seen. But Suhrab would not believe it.

“He ran to the spot and bade them bring torches and all the warriors and singing girls followed him. When Suhrab saw that it was true,

he was sorely grieved; but he would not allow the banquet to end for he did not want the spirits of his men to be dampened with pity. So they went back to the feast.

“The dawn did not come quick enough for Suhrab. He put on his armour and, taking Hajir with him, climbed to the highest hill overlooking the battlefield. Turning to Hajir, Suhrab said, ‘Before the battle begins, I wish to survey my enemies and learn for myself the different foes that are faced before me. You will answer my questions as I point out to you the banners and tents of my enemies and reveal to me the names of their owners. If you deceive me, you will die a horrible death, but if you answer in honesty, I shall free you and give you great treasures.’

“Suhrab pointed to the plains below and said, ‘Look down below and behold that tent of gold brocade decorated with skins of leopard and at whose entrance stand hundreds of elephants of war. See there is a throne of turquoise and a standard of violet is floating gaily with the moon and the sun within its framework. Tell me truly the knight that owns this standard.’ To this Hajir quickly replied, ‘It is the King of King’s, the ruler of Iran and master of all the world.’

“Pointing to the right, Suhrab continued, ‘Now that other tent there, I see the place is in mourning and that banner that floats above has the appearance of an elephant.’ Again Hajir replied promptly ‘The man is Tus and is the son of Nuder, recently slain by Afrasiab of Turan.’

“Moving on further, the gallant youth enquired again, pointing to a large crowd of knights in rich armour. Their ensign showed a lion in a background of gold. Hajir answered, “That is the camp of Gurdurz, the valiant, from whose loins eighty men of might have sprung.’

“Then Suhrab asked, ‘Now to whom belongs the tent draped with green tissues, one over which flies the flag of Kavah? See, there is a mighty Pehliva seated on a throne who rises head and shoulders above all men around him, dwarfing them. And see that mighty steed, it looks as if it has the strength of an elephant and the shoulders of a lion. I see yet another standard in the same camp, that of a lion slaying a dragon. This must be some great warrior. I must know who this man is.’

“Now Hajir was greatly disturbed, for the camp below being described to him was mine. If he let this youth know who I was, he would at once attack me, on whom the hopes of Iran rested that day. So he tried to answer casually, ‘This man seems a stranger to me. It is possible he is some knight from far-off Cathay, of whom I have not heard before.’

“In spite of all his efforts, Suhrab was unable to find out if I was present below among the Iranian warriors or not. But he was confident that Kai Kavus would not venture to battle without me and that, unless he forced the issue, Hajir might not tell him the truth. He unsheathed his sword and, holding the man by his throat, said, ‘Show me the tent

of Rustam forthwith, or you will force me to bring darkness to your eyes this moment. Choose, therefore, as you will.’

“Hajir felt the moment of truth was at hand and he trembled for his life but, having been a warrior and a true son of Iran, he felt it would be wrong to give this information to his enemy. He knew that no doubt I had been unvanquished and could even withstand the onslaught of Suhrab, but it was not in his nature to allow his enemy to have the initiative of surprise in his hands and scornfully said, ‘Do what you will, I would rather perish, than reveal unto you who is Rustam. This I will say to you that when you stand before him in the battle field, you will know the terror, you are at this moment trying to instill in me. Do your worst,’ and even as he said these words, Suhrab struck him with his sword and severed his head with one great blow.

“Then with one great bound, he leapt onto his steed and rushed to the camp of the Iranians breaking barriers and striking terror in the hearts of all those who came before him, and then in great rage and in a voice of thunder roared at the camp of Kai Kavus, that he had come forth to revenge his uncle and called upon the king, if he would dare to do battle against him.

“There was great confusion throughout the camp and the nobles and the king would not accept the challenge. They judged from what they saw, that none of them would be able to withstand this warrior, whose voice struck terror in their hearts, for the man was stalwart in form and majestic of mien. They knew that I was the only man who could withstand this youth and as one man, they rushed to my camp and asked me to face their enemy.

“They did not even wait for me to speak. They made me put on my armour in haste, saddled Rakush and literally dragged us out of the court, crying, ‘Make haste, for this is no ordinary combat that awaits you. We believe the son of Satan stands before us, and if you will not hasten, we will all perish.’ The fright and fear within these nobles was something unseen and unheard of before.

“**W**hen I rode out to the battlefield, I beheld a youth who seemed to have the strength of a lion, but the face of a babe. His arms would have gladdened the hearts of even my father, so mighty was this youth. I knew that this would be one of my greatest fights, but I also felt drawn to this boy, so I said to him, ‘Let us go apart from hence, and step forth from the lines of the armies.’ There was a vast expanse between the two camps and I saw that Suhrab readily complied with my words and together we made our way towards this open place. Then Suhrab made ready for open combat and prepared to fall upon me. I could not raise my arm to defend myself, as I felt a great love flowing from me towards this youth. I raised my hand to check his advance and called

The battle of the giants



RUSTAM



SURAB

THE FIGHT THAT WOKE JUDGEMENT DAY

out to him, Tarry a while, O young man! The earth is cold and life is warm. I would like to talk to you a while. My heart goes out to you and I have no wish that you should fall by my hands, for neither man nor Divs nor animals have withstood my might. Pray, let us stop this encounter and talk for a while, for if you will quit the ranks of these Turkomans, we of Iran have great need of heroes like you.'

"I could see that Suhrab also was drawn towards me and seemed to respect my words. He galloped slowly alongside of me and said, 'Great Pehliva, I would like to ask you a question. Answer me truly, are you Rustam, the son of Zal, the son of Sam, for something tells me, that you are Rustam, and I long to meet this warrior!' I was taken aback and surprised, and parried the question by saying, 'I am but a slave; what makes you think I am Rustam? You err greatly, I do not belong to the great race of warriors of Nariman.'

"I spoke these words so that Suhrab might be afraid when he beheld my prowess, and deem that yet greater might was hidden in the camp of his enemy. But when Suhrab heard these words, he was sad. His hopes that had risen so high were shattered, and the day that had looked so bright turned dark before his eyes. Then he made ready for the combat, and we fought.

*"Their Hindi sabres then at once they drew.
And from the iron, sparks of fire they flew
Till with the heavy blows, their weapons broke,
What fight was this, the Judgement Day that awoke!"*

"The fight being inconclusive we went our ways, and I fell upon the men of Turan, and spread confusion far and wide among their ranks, and Suhrab raged along the lines of Iran, and men and horses fell under his hands. I was sad in my soul, and I turned with sorrow to my camp. But when I saw the destruction Suhrab had wrought, my anger was kindled and I reproached the youth, and challenged him to come forth yet again to single combat. But the day was far spent and we resolved to rest until morrow, both unconscious of who we were:

*"All living creatures know their young again.
Fish in the sea and wild ass in the plain.
Yet nor from pain nor love the mortal knows.
His very offspring from one of his foes."*

"Then I went before Kai Kavus and told him of this boy of valour, and I prayed to Lord Ahuramazda that He would give me strength to vanquish my foe. Yet I made ready also my house lest I should fall in the fight, and I commanded that a tender message be borne to Rudabeh, and I sent words of comfort to Zal, my father. And Suhrab too in his camp lauded my might, and he said how the battle had been sore, and how his mind misgave him of the issue. He confided to Homan, 'My mind is filled with thoughts of this aged man, mine adversary, for it would seem to me that his stature is like mine, and that I behold about

him the tokens that my mother recounted to me. And my heart goes out towards him, and I muse if it be Rustam, my father, for it ill behoves me to combat him. So, I beseech you, tell me how this may be.'

"But Homan answered, 'Oft have I looked upon the face of Rustam in battle, and mine eyes have beheld his deeds of valour; but this man in no wise resembles him, nor is his manner of wielding his club the same.' These things Homan spoke in his vileness, because Afrasiab had enjoined him to lead Suhrab to destruction. And Suhrab held his peace, but he was not wholly satisfied.

"Now when the day began to lighten the sky and clear away the shadows, Suhrab and I strode forth to the midway spot that stretched between the armies. Suhrab bore in his hands a mighty club, and the garb of battle was upon him; but he was full of smiles, and asked how I had rested, adding, 'Why have you prepared your heart for battle? Cast away, I beg this mace and sword of vengeance. Let us doff our armour, and seat ourselves together in amity, and let wine soften our angry deeds, for it seems to me that this conflict is impure. And if you will listen to my desires, my heart shall speak to you of love, and I will make tears of shame spring up into your eyes. And for this cause, I ask you yet again, tell me your name, neither hide it any longer, for I behold that you are of noble race. And it seems to be that you are Rustam, the chosen one, the Lord of Zubulistan, the son of Zal, the son of Sam, the hero.'

"But Rustam answered, 'O hero of tender age, we are not come forth to parley but to combat, and mine ears are sealed against your words of lure. I am an old man, and you are young, but we are girded for battle, and the Master of the world shalt decide between us.'

"Then Suhrab said, 'O man of many years, why will you not listen to the counsel of a stripling? I desired that your soul should leave your body in the safety of your own home, but you have elected to perish in combat. That which is ordained must be done, therefore let us make ready for the conflict.'

"So we made ourselves ready and when we had bound our steeds, we fell upon each other.

*"With panther-skin, cuirass and coat of mail,
The spear couldst dost no harm or arrow hail.
Both shot their cloud of arrows thick and fast;
Thou wouldn't have said a tree its leaves hath cast,"*

"The crash of our encounter was heard like thunder throughout the camps, and we measured our strength from morning until the setting of the sun. And when the day was about to vanish, Suhrab seized me by the girdle, threw me upon the ground, and knelt over me. Drawing his sword from his scabbard, he would have severed my head from the

trunk, but I knew that only guile could save me. So I said, ‘O young man, you do not know the customs of combat. It is written in the laws of honour that he who overthrows a brave man for the first time should not destroy him, but preserve him for fight a second time; then only is it given unto him to kill his adversary.’

“And Suhrab listened to my crafty words, and stayed his hand and let me go. As the day was ended, he sought to fight no more, but chased the deer until the night was spent. Then came to him Homan, and asked of the adventures of the day. And Suhrab told him how he had vanquished the tall man, and how he had granted him freedom. And Homan reproached him for his folly thus, ‘Alas! young man, you did fall into a snare, for this is not the custom amongst the brave. And now perchance you will yet fall under the hands of this warrior.’ Suhrab was abashed when he heard the words of Homan, but he said, ‘Be not grieved, for in an hour we meet again in battle, and verily he will not stand a third time against my youthful strength.’

“While Suhrab was in his camp, I hastened to a nearby spring beside the battlefield, undid my armour and refreshed my tired limbs with the cold, sparkling waters. The day’s battle had, for the first time in my life, distressed me and, as was my wont, I knelt in prayer and thanked the Lord for bringing me safely back from battle. I remembered full well when first God had covenanted with me for the defence of Iran and

*“On me, God such mighty strength conferred
That, if upon a stone I down would sit
Both my feet at once would sink in it.”*

“I had then asked God to relieve me of some of my strength, which he did. I began to think, I would need it again before the day was through.

“Suhrab was on the battle ground early that morning, rampaging like a wild elephant, and his voice was loud and strong and somehow the freshness of his youth and strength made me feel like an old man. I conquered my fears and rode out to the battlefield and, even as I did so, Suhrab galloped forward in a mad rush to pin me down with his lance, roaring with a voice of thunder, ‘How have you dared come forth against me this day, for you had fled even as I would have slain you yesterday! I say to you now, this day shall be your last.’

The slaying of a Son “When I heard him and looked upon him, I was seized with misgiving, and I learnt to know fear. So I prayed to Lord Ahuramazda that He should restore to me the full powers He had first conferred on me. I felt a surge of strength flowing through me and I knew that my prayers had been answered. I then fell upon Suhrab with all my newfound might, and with my attack shook him to the core and though Suhrab returned to battle with vigour, the hour of overthrow had come.

I took him by the girdle, hurled him to the earth, and broke his back like a reed. When I had drawn my sword to sever his body, Suhrab knew it was the end, and he gave a great sigh. Writhing in agony, he said, That which has come about, it is my fault, and henceforward will my youth be a theme of derision amongst people. I sped not forth for empty glory, but I went out to seek my father; for my mother had told me by what tokens I should know him, and I perish for longing after him. And now have my pains been fruitless, for it has not been given to me to look upon his face. Yet I say to you, if you should become a fish that swims in the depths of the ocean, if you should change to a star that is concealed in the farthest heaven, my father would draw you forth from your hiding place, and avenge my death upon you when he shall learn that the earth has become my bed. For my father is Rustam the Pehliva, and it shalt be told to him that Suhrab his son perished in quest of his face.”

As Rustam relived that terrible day, the death of his own son smote him with awesome clarity and the very presence of his listener, Bahman, grew dim. He was no longer in the great banquet-hall, but back on that battlefield, seeing Suhrab’s life ebbing out of him, uncheckable. All his life seemed as if shattered, seeing his son lifeless before him. When the youth opened his eyes, Rustam cried to him in deepest agony and said, “Have you any token of Rustam that I may know the truth of these awful words that I now hear? For I am Rustam the wretched and am in great despair and curse my very name.”

Suhrab looked at his father and the misery that was in him matched that of Rustam and he cried, “If you are Rustam, the father I have long sought, then you have stained your sword in the life-blood of your son. I repeatedly sought to question you on this, but fate was against me and you by your obstinacy made things worse. Again and again, I implored you to tell me your name, for I saw in you the things I had heard from my mother. But you turned against me and now the hour has gone and our meeting has now become a sad farewell for all time. I beseech you, open my armour and see for yourself the talisman upon my arm, for it is an onyx given to me by my father as a token, whereby I could claim kinship with the great Rustam.”

The onyx was there and at its sight, a great cry went out from Rustam and he tore his clothes in distress and covered his head with ashes and great tears rolled down his rugged cheeks. But Suhrab spoke to him, “What has been done, has been done, and to weep now will do no good, for doubtless, it was written in the sands of time.”

Meanwhile the Iranians who were worried about Rustam came forth to look for him. At this moment Suhrab requested his father that he should not take vengeance on the men that he had led against Iran and should allow them to return in peace. To keep Suhrab happy, Rustam sent a message to Homan saying, “The sword of vengeance must slumber in the scabbard. You are now leader of the host. Return

therefore to your own land and depart across the river ere many days be fallen. As for me, I will fight no more, yet neither will I speak to you again, for you did hide from my son the tokens of his father; it was your iniquity thet led him into this pit.”

Meanwhile he had sent Gurdurz at a quick gallop to the king to ask of him the elixir of life which, if availed of at once, could save the life of his son. Gurdurz rode with the speed of a whirlwind but found Kai Kavus hard of heart, who forgot the many services Rustam had rendered to Iran and shut his ears to the cry of his Pehliva. For he feared that, if Suhrab was restored, father and son would be too strong and might even venture to take the throne away from him.

Even as Gurdurz returned without the balm, Suhrab had departed from this world. Rustam was heart-broken and his distress was terrible to perceive and the reproaches he heaped upon himself were great. He made a big bonfire and into it threw all his trappings of Roum, his saddle, his leopard-skin, his armour, and in fact, all signs of his greatness. And he stood by and looked on to see his pride in the dust and cried, “My heart is sick unto death.”

When he became calm, he swathed Suhrab’s body in rich brocades of gold and fine silk, worthy of a king, and when they had enfolded him, he marched with his army in a funeral procession to return to Zubulistan. The nobles marched before the bier with their heads covered with ashes, their garments torn, the drums of war were shattered and their cymbals were broken; the tails of their horses were shorn to the root, and with all signs of mourning abroad.

Zal and Rudabeh were the first to meet him and when they saw this youth, so like in features and in might to Sam, the son of Nariman, and when they heard how this youth’s death had been wrought and who he was, both set up a great lamentation.

Rustam then built a great tomb for Suhrab in the shape of a horse’s hoof and therein laid gold perfumed with ambergris and Suhrab’s body he covered with rich brocade of gold. Rustam’s house and court were for a long while in mourning and for many years Rustam did not raise his head.

Tahminah’s agony

When news of Suhrab’s death reached his mother at Samangan, the manner of Tahminah’s distress was terrifying to behold!

And she wept, *“Who is there now in my embrace to lay.
And who wilt now my sorrow drive away?
Whom can I tell my sorrow and my care?
For whom instead of thee a place prepare ?
Woe for my body, soul, my lamp, my eye.
From gardens torn, thou in the dust dost lie.”*

Then, *“With her own hand her body vest she rent.
Her form shone forth like a ruby ornament.
With shouts and groans lamenting to the day.
From time to time her senses passed away.
Her eyeballs from their sockets then she drew.
Lifting them high unto the flames she threw.
Her ringlets, twisted like a noose, she clenched.
And from their roots with her own hand she wrenched.
The streams of blood, as rivers when they swell.
Flowed down her cheeks; at times she prostrate fell.
Black dust she strewed upon her head afresh.
And with her teeth tore off her arms the flesh,
Then fire upon her head she cast and lit.
And all her musk-like locks were burnt with it.”*

And so her spirit went forth after Suhrab.

So died Suhrab, the valiant son of Rustam. Fate seemed to be unkind to this great hero. He was the mightiest of this gallant breed of warriors, all of whose father was Nariman. He was also the last of them, for it was decreed that in the house of Zal, a son would be born of him through a slave. Goodly of mien like Sam the hero, but he would be the destroyer of this great breed of men, the like of which was not to be seen again.

When Zal heard this reading of the stars from his mobeds, he prayed to his God that this dreadful fate be averted from his head, and he reared the boy tenderly. When he came to man’s estate, he sent him forth to the King of Cabul. The king rejoiced in the sight of the lad and gave him his daughter to wife.

And as it was said, so it came to be and Shugdad, the step-brother of Rustam, conspired with the King of Cabul to destroy Rustam to whom this king paid tribute. As Zuhak planned with Satan the destruction of his father, so Shugdad with the King of Cabul (Zuhak’s descendant) dug a pit with spears implanted at the bottom and planned the destruction of Rustam. Then the King of Cabul invited Rustam to a great feast where a hunt was proposed the next day.

All were gathered with the King of Cabul for the hunt next morning, but Rustam’s mighty steed, Rakush, refused to go forward and for the first time in his life would not obey the command of his master. When Rustam beheld Rakush’s fear and hesitation, he was greatly offended and sprang upon his back and struck him, an act he had never done in his life.

Stricken to the heart, Rakush broke forth into a violent gallop and both fell headlong into the pit, impaling the steed and rider upon the irons that were hidden in the ground. With rivers of blood flowing from his torn body, Rustam first swooned in his agony, but with his great strength

Epilogue

he managed to draw himself out of the pit. Seeing the great joy on the evil Shugdad's face, he knew that his destruction had been planned by his brother and though his strength failed him, he called out, "It is you who has done this evil deed." To which Shugdad replied, "You have caused many to perish by the sword, it is meet that you should perish by it yourself."

Then Rustam pretended to be reconciled, and bade Shugdad and the King of Cabul to leave him to his fate but, as a last request, to hand him his bow and two arrows so that he could protect himself in case a lion came by before he was dead. Shugdad did so, but even as he handed over the weapon, he realised his mistake and both fled before Rustam. Knowing that he could not get out of Rustam's sight quickly enough, Shugdad hid himself in a large tree which was old and hollow. But Rustam saw where he was hid. Though the dimness of death had come over his eyes, he raised himself from the ground in great pain and took into his mighty hands his great bow. He knew that this was to be his last act. He knew that Shugdad was hidden in the trunk of that great tree. As he bent the bow, his body was racked with indescribable pain but he gathered his will and his body surged with sudden strength for this one last great effort.

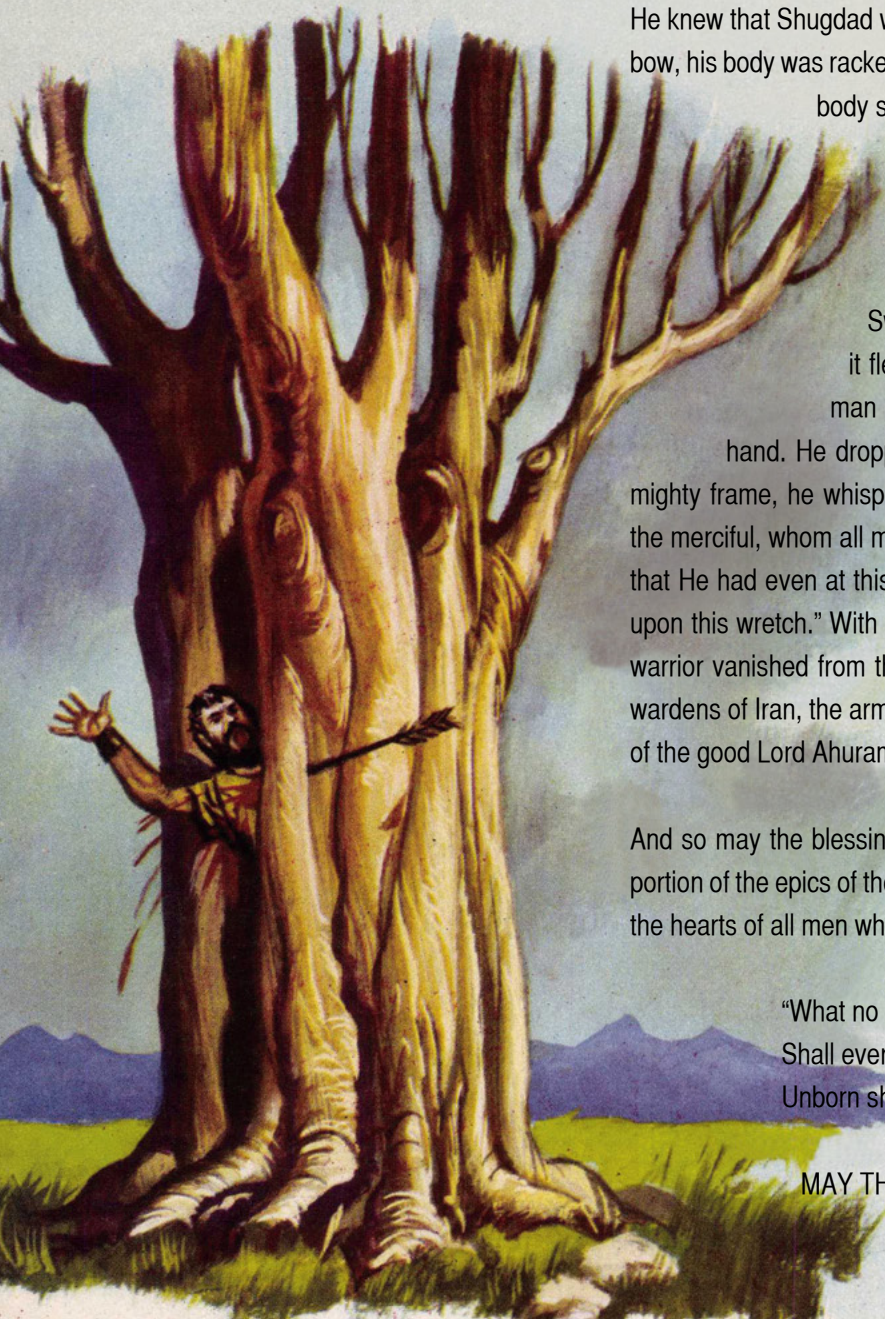
The mighty bow was bent, and there went forth the arrow, the last one that Rustam, the great Pehliva, would send forth.

Swift was its flight through the air and straight to its mark it flew through the great tree and into the heart of that evil man Shugdad. His deed accomplished, the bow fell from his hand. He dropped to his knees and as the strength ebbed out of his mighty frame, he whispered, "Thanks be unto my gracious Lord Ahuramazda, the merciful, whom all my days I have sought to serve, and I am deeply grateful that He had even at this last moment granted to me strength to avenge myself upon this wretch." With these spoken words, the wrath went out of him and the warrior vanished from this world and with him ended the train of Pehlivas, the wardens of Iran, the armoured might of the King of Kings, and the avenging arm of the good Lord Ahuramazda.

And so may the blessings of God rest upon all men. Here comes to a close a portion of the epics of the Kings of Iran. The tale is ended but it will go on living in the hearts of all men who value wisdom and valour, courage and honour:

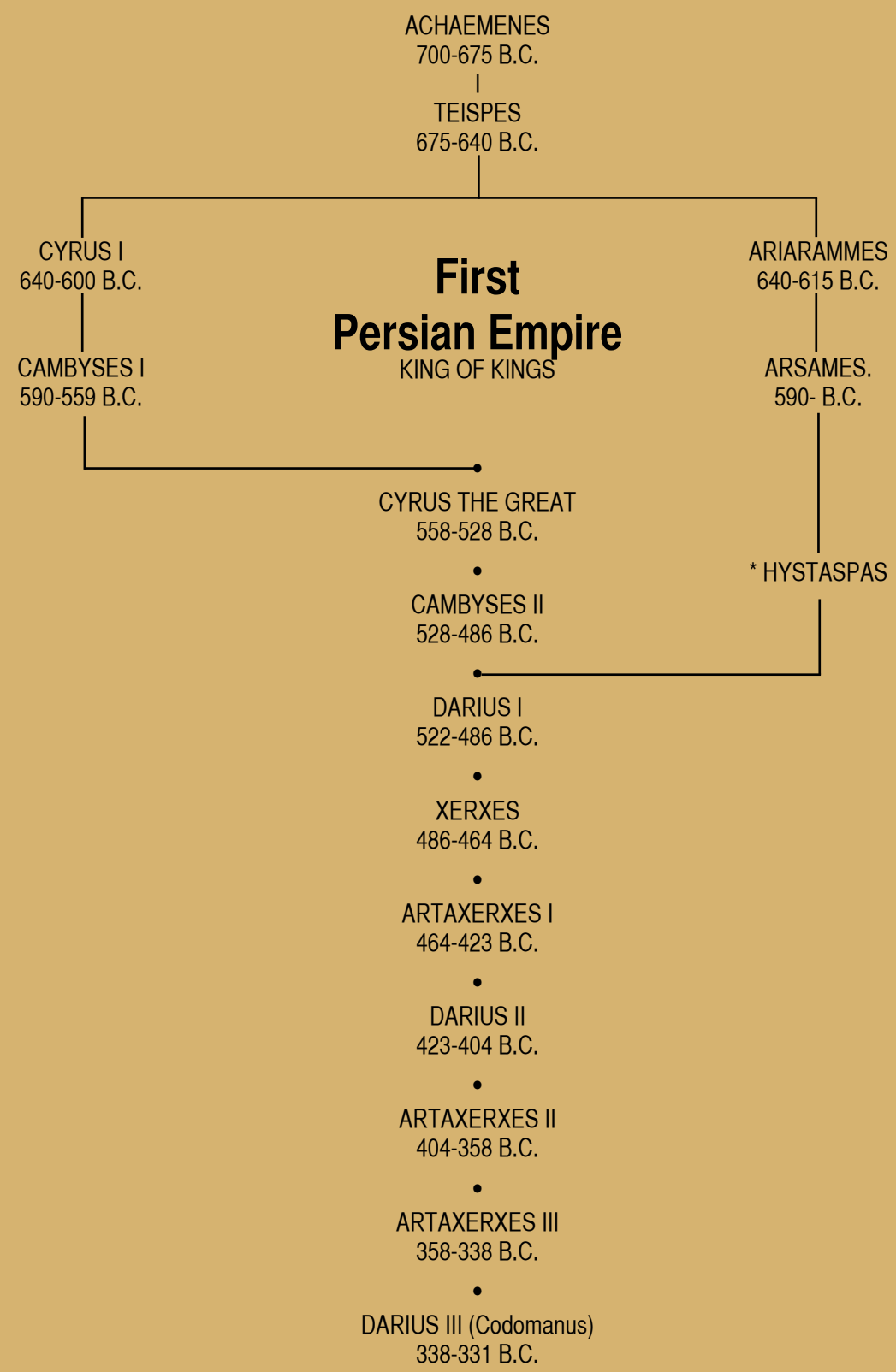
"What no tide
Shall ever wash away, what men
Unborn shall read o'er ocean wide."

MAY THE LORD AHURAMAZDA BE PRAISED



THE LAST ENCOUNTER

THE ACHAEMENIAN DYNASTY
King of Anshan and Pars (Persis)



* Hystaspas never became king. His name is written in three ways, in Greek Hystaspas, in Avestan Vishtaspa and in Pahlavi Gushtaspa. He is not the Vishtaspa of the Avesta and the Gushtaspa of the Shahnamah who was the king of Bactria and belonged to the Kianian Dynasty.

VASHNA AHURAMAZDAHA
...THROUGH THE GRACIOUS WILL OF AHURAMAZDA

IF THUS THOU THINKEST: " HOW MANY
ARE THE LANDS WHICH DARIUS THE KING
GOVERNED,"-THEN LOOK UPON THIS
SCULPTURE WHICH BEARS MY THRONE,-
THAT THOU MAYEST KNOW! - THEN SHALL
IT BE KNOWN TO THEE THAT THE LANCE
OF THE PERSIAN HERO HAS REACHED AFAR.
THEN SHALT THOU KNOW THAT THE PERSIAN
HERO HAS FOUGHT BATTLES FAR FROM PERSIA.

PERSIAN HISTORY

ACHAEMENIAN DYNASTY
A PERIOD OF MAZDA YASNA

THUS SAITH DARIUS THE KING: WHAT I
HAVE DONE, I HAVE DONE ALL THROUGH
THE GRACIOUS WILL OF AHURAMAZDA.-
AHURAMAZDA GAVE ME AID TILL I HAD
COMPLETED THIS WORK.-MAY AHURAMAZDA
PROTECT ME, AND MY CLAN, AND THIS
PROVINCE AGAINST... HOSTS. FOR THIS I
PRAY AHURAMAZDA,-THIS MAY AHURAMAZDA
AFFORD ME :- O MAN MAY WHAT IS THE
COMMAND OF AHURAMAZDA BE TO THEE
ACCEPTABLE,-THINK NO EVIL-
ABANDON NOT THE RIGHT PATH:-SIN NOT'

SUCH ARE THE VOICES FROM THE STONE

Immortal Iran

Iran is a triangle surrounded by mountains rising around a central depression, a desert set again between two other depressions, the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. The Zagros mountains straddle 620 miles of the country running north-west to south-west to depths of 120 miles in numerous folds. The historic Elbruz has its range along the southern rim of the Caspian sea, its highest mountain being Mt. Demavand. In the west, the range touches beautiful Azarbaezan and in the east ends in the mountains of Khorasan, the granary of Iran.

The Aryan race surged through these natural gateways—in the west was the region between the Caspian and Lake Urumiah and in the east, the valley of Atrek and plains of Gurgan between the mountains and the Caspian. The Medes, the Persians, the Kurdis, the Mongols and the Turks had their first home in the western valleys of the Elbruz and the Median Dynasty rose here.

Persis (Parsa) was a small province of Iran, which formed the Median Empire. The natives of Persis were called Persians. The Medes and the Persians were cousins, both being Iranis. The exact date when the Medes and the Persians arrived on the Iranian plateau is not known but there is no doubt that the two passed through the Caucasus and the Persians were the ones who moved south-west first. After infiltrating the folds of the Zagros mountains, the Persians settled down close to Anshan in the country of Parsa east of Susa, a territory belonging to Elam, the kingdom which allowed their entry.

So it was that the Persians settled as dependants of the Elamites in the land of their choice. This later became their true homeland with each family and tribe remaining virtually independent. The Elamite state deteriorated and weakened and was finally destroyed by the Assyrians, creating the right climate for the ambitions of the Persians, both with regard to the Elamite and later on, the Medes.

The small kingdom of Persis in the south-west of Iran along the Persian Gulf was formed after the Persians had settled on the foothills of the Bakhtiari mountains. The founder of this kingdom was Achaemenes (700-675 B.C.). His son Teispes (675-640 B.C.) called himself the “King of Anshan”. At the time of his death, the Persian kingdom consisted of the province of Persis which incorporated the cities of Anshan and Pars. The kingdom was then divided between his two sons Ariarammes and Cyrus I. Ariarammes was succeeded by his son Arsames and Cyrus by Cambyses I who married the daughter of

his overlord Astyages, King of Media. Their son was Cyrus II, whom the world later called “the Great”.

Here one sees destiny’s strange ways. The Median empire fell to their vassals, the Persians, a small tribe of Iran, who then rose to form what came to be known as the world’s largest empire, well organised, and efficiently run. The Persians as most Iranis, were Zoroastrians and their religion being sublime and tolerant, theirs was the first universal empire, where people of different kingdoms lived with the right to freedom of speech and religion. This empire was called the first Persian Empire and the world termed all Iranis as Persians from that small tribe of Persis (Parsa).

On the old Median boundary, not far from the modern city of Kermanshah, a mountain called Behistun, or Behistan, rises steeply from the surrounding plain to the height of some 1700 feet. In an inward division of it, and some 300 feet from its base, in a wide cleft, stand perhaps the most impressive inscriptions to survive the ravages of time. The surface of the rock was polished for their reception, and where irregularities occur the defect has been replaced by slabs so deftly joined that the edges are scarcely visible. On a wide surface and in the ancient cuneiform character, are cut with chisel the splendid records of Darius the Great, and of his successors.

Similar inscriptions of Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes the Third are to be found on the ruins of Persepolis, Naksh-i-Rustam, Murghab, Khorkor and Susa, as also on Mount Alvand, near Hamadan, while the most important inscription which we have of Cyrus, and one of the most significant of all, is written in Assyrian upon an open vase. Those upon the mountain rocks are written in a later dialect of the Zend-Avesta language, and aside from a few difficulties, they are very clear.

In them we find expressions of religious fervour quite as marked as in the writings of any other nation. Every advantage is traced to the “grace” or “will” of Ahuramazda and is expressed in the constantly repeated words: “A Great God is Ahuramazda, who made this earth and yon Heaven, who made man . . . “

Everything points to an intense religious feeling. In the royal inscription, there is an acute awareness of the presence of God—Ahuramazda, whose exhortations to His followers to triumph over evil is the essence of Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Iran. His name appears in every foundation text connected with the King, and the final seal of this mighty God’s imprint is the appearance of the symbol of the Fravashi in important portions of this text.

Souren Melikian, in his article, “The Achaemenid Achievement” says: “There is a time in the history of every civilization when it reaches its optimal form—a moment of harmony when its internal principles

The Achaemenians

CUTTING OF THE CUNEIFORM



of evolution seem to bring all its aspects to climax. This we call classicism and such was the achievement of the Achaemenid dynasty in Iran. As a political power, it united for the first time all the Iranian people.

"Yet their most impressive achievement was of a still wider scope, one that was to leave its imprint on the world of the future. They set the pattern of the first universal empire, an empire not bound by the linguistic or ethnic frontiers of their own people but one that spread from the Indus to Egypt . . . The Achaemenid state was one of singular tolerance. Earlier conquests had meant total destruction, particularly among the Semitic nations. . . Indeed, Achaemenid tolerance was not only political, it was religious as well and it would be wrong to mistake this tolerance for indifference."

In times past, the Assyrians had wiped out the state of Judea and later Israel and every Jew, man, woman and child, was taken to Babylon in slavery. The city of Jerusalem was razed to the ground and the great Temple of the Jews destroyed to a heap of rubble and so 70 years went in bondage for the Hebrew race.

Then came from the north-east, a mighty organised force. A force, clear in its concept of how a conquered nation should be ruled. A force clear in its concept of its God; His laws, clear and compact with a code of conduct for this life, a reward and punishment for the next and then the final resurrection.

The year was B.C. 539, the dynamic force was the Iranian nation, followers of the Lord Ahuramazda and led by that mighty ruler Cyrus, King of Kings, the Great King of Iran. The moment was chosen by God, but the political overtones of events to befall the Babylonians, were foreseen, appreciated and announced by Jeremiah, and so in time, it came to happen.

From Babylon all nations in the west upto Libya, Egypt and Greece and in the east all nations upto the Hindu Kush fell to this great power. Then to all conquered nations a proclamation went forth from the Great King called The Edict of Cyrus. This indeed was no more than a Mazdayasnian declaration of the dignity of man and his right to freedom of speech and worship. It proclaimed:

*"WHEN I ENTERED BABYLON
I DID NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO TERRORIZE SUMER AND AKKAD.
I KEPT IN VIEW THE NEEDS OF BABYLON
AND ALL ITS SANCTUARIES TO PROMOTE THEIR WELL-BEING.
THE CITIZENS OF BABYLON,
I LIFTED THEIR UNBECOMING YOKE. THEIR DILAPIDATED
DWELLINGS I RESTORED.
I PUT AN END TO THEIR MISFORTUNE,
AND SET THEM FREE TO WORSHIP THEIR GODS,
WHOSE ABODES I RAISED FROM RUINS."*

The Jews held the Persian King Cyrus (in Hebrew called Koresh) in great love and affection and spoke of him as the “Avenging arm of the Lord”. In the Hebrew book of Isaiah, this Great King is called “the Anointed (Messiah) of the Lord, the Shepherd who carries out the Lord’s decrees”; he is the “Eagle called from the Orient, the Man appointed by the Lord’s counsel, strengthened by the Lord to subdue the heathens.”

This Great King and his nations while creating one of the greatest empires known to this world, found time to think of a small group of people in bondage to another nation conquered by him and set these brilliant but stubborn men free to return to their homeland and rebuild their temples and their nation. They did not all return at once. A small number went in the beginning and as others saw their brethren prosper, more followed. For more than 200 years Israel and Babylon were under Persia.

With freedom, a friendly feeling developed amongst the Jews for the Persians and they slowly began imbibing Persian traditions, improving on their doctrine of immortality and resurrection. The generosity of the Zoroastrian nation towards the Jews is evident in that they not only gave them back their freedom and their country, but also helped to deepen their austere religion.

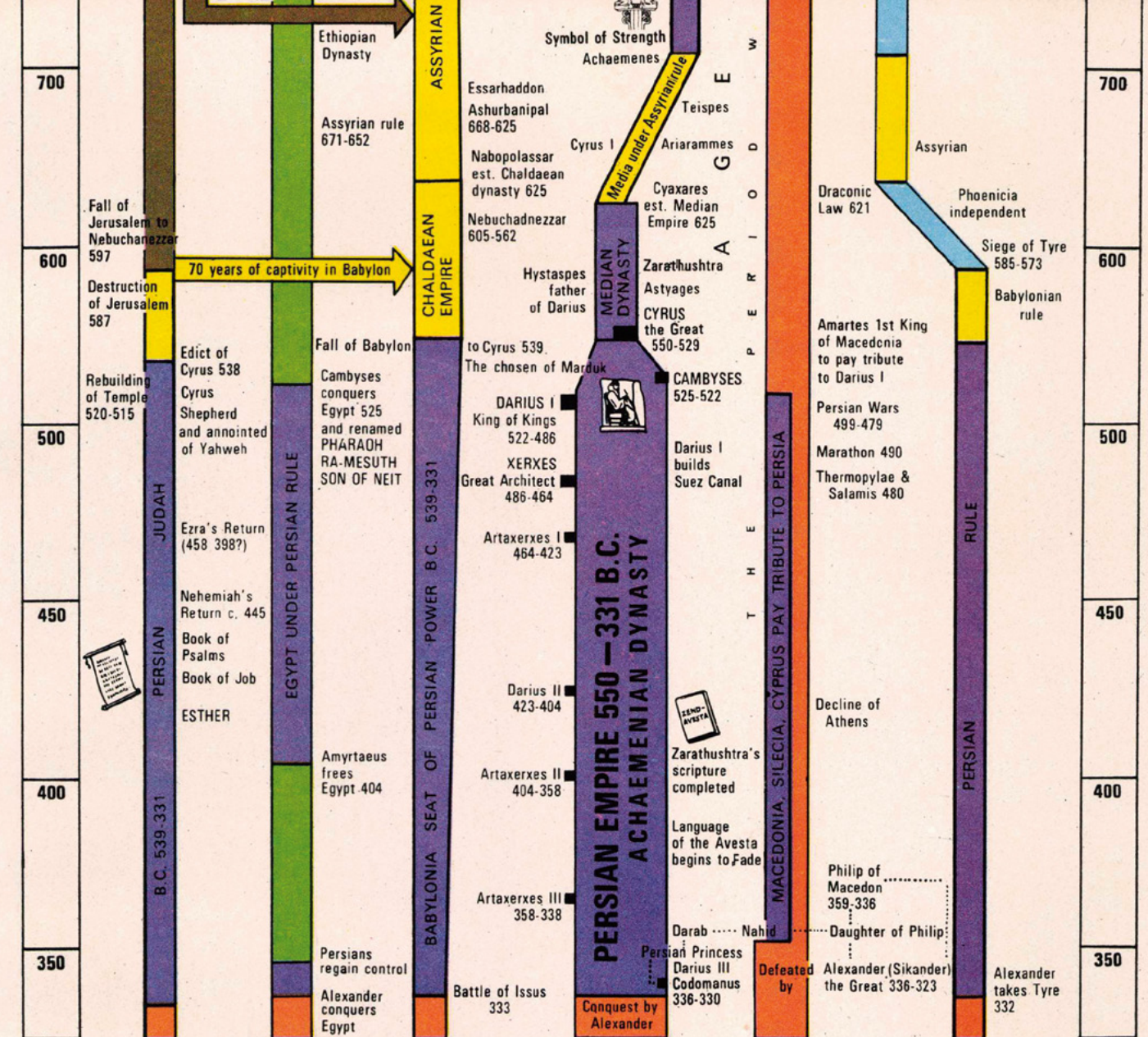
Had Cyrus failed to come on that momentous day or even continued to rule as other despots had, then where would post-exilic Judaism and pre-Christianity have been now? Somewhere no doubt, and in some form. But Cyrus did come that day; he did conquer Babylon and freed the Jews; thereby Cyrus and his successors not only saved the Jewish national existence, but restored Jewish worship with its very temple.

To ignore here the hand of God would be more than ingratitude; to deny it would be a sacrilege, for it would mean the rejection of one of God's most glorious and divine interventions in the affairs of man.

Not many have considered how great was this moment—how momentous, for with this one great act of Cyrus, he influenced the entire religious flow of the universe. In its wake, Galilee and Bethlehem came to be, and the great Black Rock of Islam took shape and the city of Jerusalem was reborn. To the entire world then came a fuller Judaism, Christianity and the religion of Islam.

And so we come to the crux of the issue. How magnanimous indeed was the Zoroastrian God, the Lord Ahuramazda who directed the hand of Cyrus, the King of Kings, that illustrious Conqueror, who never once let any edict or proclamation of any victory be written without the words:

*"Through the Gracious Will of Ahuramazda
the Life—Spirit—Lord, the Great Creator."*



What a Great Act—a Supreme Act of Ashoi—an act of a God, a sublime God—the Lord Ahuramazda, who knew no narrowness of a tribal God and claimed no chosen people. His was the religion of the universal man. So who can doubt that the Achaemenians, were not fervent Zoroastrians, though they do not mention Zarathushtra.

For long, many maintained that the ancient Kianian and Achaemenian dynasties were identical. In some instances it was shown that Darius Hystaspas (Darius the Great) the Achaemenian, and Kai Vishtaspa of the Avesta and Gushtaspa of the Shahnamah, were all one and the same and that Asfandiyar, his son, was no other than Xerxes, the son of Darius. Elsewhere, Cyrus is shown as Kai Khusru of the Kianian dynasty.

Initially the confusion arose because Pahlavi writers wished to show that the Persian nation had never been conquered as the Median or the Assyrian. They identified the last of the Achaemenian kings with the

last Kianian monarchs, successors of Kai Vishtaspa. The *Shahnamah* followed the Pahlavi works and thus the later Arabian and Persian writers have carried on this legend. Small wonder then that western writers have shown Darius Hystaspa and Kai Vishtaspa as one and the same king.

The recent discovery of the cuneiform inscriptions by Sir Henry Rawlinson reveal the entire lineage of the Achaemenians very clearly and much of the above confusion has been cleared with the comparison of the two lineage. The *Avesta* shows that Kai Vishtaspa had few descendants after him and no kings; whereas the Achaemenian inscriptions show their different kings after Darius the Great (see Time Chart page 139). Further Asfandiyar, the son of Vishtaspa, was killed by Rustam in the lifetime of the father; whereas the Achaemenian Xerxes reigned long after his father Darius had died. Therefore, the ancient Kianian dynasty and the Achaemenian were two distinct and separate dynasties of Iran and there was a wide gap of time between them. Further they reigned in different parts of Asia, one in the extreme north-east Bactria and the other in the south-west Persis (Parsa), see map page 146-147.

It is also evident that after, Kai Vishtaspa of the Kianian Dynasty, the first kingly convert of Zarathushtra and his passing away, the religion of Zarathushtra was submerged and lost to the sight of history, but remained fermenting in one of the 10 tribes of ancient Iran. That this was so is indicated by the length and size of the *Zend-Avesta*. After Spitama's five *Gathas* were begun, the work was taken over and carried on by other Zarathushtras (title of Chief Priest). We know from the *Shahnamah* that Kai Vishtaspa himself took the religion to Seistan (Zubulistan, modern Baluchistan) the land of Rustam, the great warlord, and Vishtaspa's son Asfandiyar also spread it to other parts of Iran. We know that the Sacred Fire was lit in temples in different parts of Iran and the reading of the *Zend-Avesta* was taken up all over the country. However, none of these tribes were famous and powerful and never made history. So the Zoroastrian religion lay unrecorded, but was alive and did travel from people to people and country to country, until it resurfaced thousands of years later with the emergence of the Achaemenians to power, some thousands of miles away on the dusty plains of Murghab, in the royal city of Pasargadae, in Persis.

The earliest recorded, authentic voice from the dim past stating that the Great God Ahuramazda still lived amongst the Iranians was traced to a chance found gold tablet in Hamedan (Ecbatana) and said to be inscribed by the second son of Teispes (675-640 B.C.) called Ariarammes (640-590 B.C.) the third generation of the Achaemenians and brother of Cyrus I. It said, "This land of Parsa which I possess, provided with fine horses and good men, it is the Great God Ahuramazda who has given it to me. I am the King of the land." This tablet is inscribed with cuneiform characters and also the later Avesta language. And so with this once again, the Zoroastrian religion entered the mainstream of history.

Since B.C. 600 the civilizations of Greece, Egypt, Babylon and Media had crested their peak. Further, each had swallowed all the smaller nations in their path and the once convenient buffers that stood between these great powers had disappeared and now their immediate frontiers lay tauntly balanced against each other. The situation was conducive to the emergence of a strong ruler in any one of these nations.

Like a thunderclap Cyrus the Great erupted from the dusty plains of Murghab and from the city of Pasargadae in Persis (Parsa). At one point he was just the grandson and petty vassal of Astyages, the King of Media and in the next moment, a minor quarrel and misunderstanding pitted the armies of Media and Persis in numerous battles against each other. Finally, Cyrus emerged a victor and was hailed as the King of the Persians and the Medes, and so was born a great conqueror.

All this happened swiftly sometime around B.C. 550. Yet, the kings of the different nations were slow to note that a mighty star had risen from a vassal state of one of their fellow kings. A star which was to streak through their kingdoms uprooting in swift strokes their different frontiers to realign all their kingdoms into one mighty empire—the empire of the Persians under the Achaemenian dynasty.

About this time, the whole of Asia Minor was a Greek territory and except for Lycia and Cilicia, formed the kingdom of Lydia under the able, ambitious and virtuous Prince called Croesus, son of Halyattes. Croesus was partial to the Greeks and encouraged men of genius and learning of that nation in his court. He was at this time the master of the whole of the western coast of Asia Minor with all its naval power. Sardis, the capital, had now become a great centre of trade and its wealth and prosperity became legendary. He regarded the Persians with contempt, but was shrewd enough to realise the possible danger Cyrus posed. Therefore to crush the growing power of the Persians, he sent ambassadors to Babylon, Thrace and others to form a confederation to surround Cyrus and destroy his kingdom.

Possibly, all this had already reached the ears of Cyrus and he invited Cilicia to accept peacefully his overlordship and when the latter accepted, he had successfully cut the route along which Lydia could expect help. As a preliminary to his offensive he then called on the Lydian king also to submit to his sovereignty and pay tribute to him. Croesus refused and without waiting for his allies, marched his forces into Cappadocia which was a Median territory and conquered it. He also conquered the strong Hittite city of Pteria. On being informed of this, Cyrus rushed with his army and a great but indecisive battle was fought between the Lydians and the Persians in the district of Pteria. The loss on both sides was great and Croesus was forced to retreat to his capital Sardis. This was in the spring of B.C. 547.

At this point Croesus made his first miscalculation. Cyrus made a feinting action, which to Croesus seemed as if Cyrus was hesitating and with-

A Conqueror is born

The defeat of Croesus

drawing from the encounter. Instead of being vigilant, Croesus disbanded his army and precisely at this moment Cyrus reappeared at the gates of Sardis, the capital of the Lydian empire. Once again Croesus underestimated the strength of his enemy and rushed out of his capital with his cavalry hoping to subdue the Persians. The Lydians were allowed to enter the valley before the city and were surprised to meet for the first time the Persian cavalry mounted on camels.

The Persian cavalry all this while had used horses, but at this stage Cyrus adopted a device, suggested to him by his Median General Harpagus, and used camels instead. In fact, these camels were used to carry army provisions and baggage. The Persian horsemen were asked to quickly unload the camels and ride them into battle. This cavalry of camels was sent in front to oppose the Lydian cavalry and as was expected, the Lydian horses seeing and smelling the camels turned round and galloped away. In the confusion, the Lydians were slaughtered before the very gates of Sardis and Croesus and some of his generals barely escaped into the city.

The siege of Sardis had now begun. At this time, Croesus sent out entreating messages to his allies to come to his help and thus release Sardis, but the route for help was cut earlier and the trap now shut. The siege had barely lasted two weeks and would certainly have gone on for a long time, when one day a certain Mardian General Hyroeades observed a Lydian soldier descending from a section of a bastion to retrieve his helmet which had rolled down from the top. The matter was brought to the notice of Cyrus and that evening under instructions from the king, Hyroeades with a few gallant Persian soldiers ascended that particular, vulnerable spot and threw open the gates of Sardis to the attacking Medo-Persian army. Sardis fell to the Persians in the year B.C. 546.

Some interesting stories are told of the capture of Sardis. It is said that at the moment when Persian soldiers had surrounded Croesus in his palace and were about to kill him, a son of his, who was dumb all his life exclaimed pitifully: “Man! Do not kill Croesus.” Thus Croesus was saved and his son retained his power of speech for the rest of his life.

The mighty Croesus with all his fabulous wealth was now the prisoner of Cyrus. When Croesus saw himself in this deplorable condition, he was suddenly reminded of the wise Greek philosopher of his time, Solon. He groaned aloud and uttered thrice the name of Solon. Upon being forced by Cyrus to interpret these words, he explained, “One I would give much to see converse with every monarch.” Being further pressed by the Persian to explain himself fully, he related how a long time before, Solon, the great Athenian philosopher had seen all his treasure and made light of it and had predicted his fall. What he had forecast had taken place, but Croesus now thought that it applied to the whole world. Cyrus on hearing this, ordered his soldiers to release Croesus.

The forming of the empire

Hereafter Cyrus treated Croesus more as a friend than a foe. By the end of B.C. 545, the Lydian empire was brought under the Persian yoke and the entire peninsula of Asia Minor formed a part of the new Persian empire divided into provinces. After the defeat of Croesus, Cyrus moved east, leaving his Generals Mazares and Harpagus to subdue the Ionians, Aeolians and Phoenicians and before long except for some wild tribes such as the Pisidians, the whole of Asia Minor was subdued and conquered. Meanwhile, Cyrus did not rest on his laurels. He personally saw to the conquest of Armenia, Bactria and Carmania. From there he went on to Sogdiana and Margiana. The Eastern campaign lasted 15 years and by then he was master of the whole of Asia, except Babylonia.

Pasargadae The Royal City of Cyrus

By now Cyrus had won fame as a great king and humane conqueror. His conquests did not end in bloody and destructive triumph like those of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Media and Lydia suffered no destruction and their capitals, Sardis and Ecbatana were untouched and allowed to remain as capitals. In fact, Ecbatana was one of Cyrus' capitals. Further, Astyages and Croesus ended their lives peacefully. Pasargadae now became a great city. It was the capital of the Persian nation and the royal city of Cyrus. In this city was built one of the most famous fire temples and in this city by tradition, all the Iranian kings were crowned till the Islamic conquest. Darius and his son Xerxes built and extended Persepolis which in time became the imperial city of the Persians and acquired a grandeur befitting the Persian empire. Despite this, Pasargadae remained the royal city. It had the stamp of Cyrus the Great and with this, its fame for posterity was sealed.

Babylon

The book of *Genesis* says, “Now Chus begot Nemrod: he began to be mighty on earth . . . and the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon.”

From the above and after careful study of the subject, most scholars have come to the conclusion that Babylon was founded by Nimrod and was embellished by Semiramis (said to be a Bactrian queen defeated by Nimus, the builder of Babylon and then taken as wife by him) and later repaired and extended by Nebuchadnezzar. Further, some of these scholars identified Nimrod, the founder with Zuhak, the scrouge of Iran. The southern part of Babylonia was called Sumer and the north, Accad. The kings of Babylon came to be known as King of Sumer and Accad. There must have been a mixed population of Babylonia and Chaldea, forming the two great nations of Sumer and Accad. The Sumerians seemed to have been the first to come and the earlier Semites reached Euphrates by way of the Syrian coast to find their first Babylonian settlement in Accad. However, the moulding of Babylonian culture was due mostly to the Sumerians. Babylon is said

to be the largest city of ancient times and its circuit is claimed to be 36 miles. This would mean that Babylon was larger than the world's largest city today. A description of the city is given below from the historical writings of Nebuchadnezzar.

“There was the outer city on both the banks of the Euphrates, surrounded by a broad moat and massive wall of burnt brick. This outer wall contained huge gates with doors of cedar covered with brass. It was adorned with towers and was very broad so that the Chariots with four horses used to pass easily. The sides of this wall were protected by floods and marsh. It surrounded the area termed by Josephus as the outer city. An interval of 100 to 200 feet was left clear of houses on the inside of the wall. The space contained within this rampart was not entirely filled with streets, but was ploughed and sowed, so that, in the case of a siege, the place might be fed by its own produce. The streets all ran in straight lines, not only those parallel to the river, but also the cross streets which led down to the water-side, and the houses were mostly three to four stories high. The exterior ramparts were brought down on both sides to the edge of the Euphrates; thence, from the covers there was carried along each bank of the river a fence of burnt bricks. At the river end of the cross streets were placed low gates in the fence, which were like the great gates in the outer wall, of brass, and opened on the water.

“The city of Babylon was divided into two distinct parts by the river Euphrates, which passes through the middle of the city. Before the reign of Nitocris (mother of Nabonidus) it was very hard and troublesome for Babylonians to cross in a boat. While Nitocris was digging the lake she thought of a plan to remove this inconvenience. She ordered huge blocks of stones to be hewed, and when they were ready, and the basin excavated, she turned the entire stream of the Euphrates into this cutting. Thus while the basin was filled, the natural bed of the river remained dry for the time being. She then lined the banks of the stream within the city with quays of burnt bricks and also bricked the landing places opposite the river gates. After this she built, as near the middle of the town as possible, a stone bridge, the blocks whereof were bound together with iron and lead. It was the hardest thing to dig out mud, so as to arrive at ground still enough for a foundation. Diodorus has attributed this work to Semiramis.

“He relates how she made a bridge over the narrowest part of the river, five furlongs in length, laying the supports and pillars of the arches with great art and skill, and in the bottom of the river twelve feet distant from each other. The stones were bound together with hooks of iron so that they might be more firmly jointed; and the joints were filled up with melted lead. This bridge was floored with great joints and planks of cedar, cypress and palm trees. It was 30 feet in breadth, and for art and curiosity yielded to none of her works. The vaulted building in the southern citadel contains the well with three shafts that enclosed the machinery for watering the famous hanging gardens, the lofty trees

of which afforded a grateful shade. This hanging garden was four hundred feet square. ‘Among the seven wonders of the world are reckoned this wall of Babylon, and the Hanging Garden: the shape of the garden is a square, and each side of it measures four plethra.’ These gardens equal in height the walls of the town. The garden consisted of terraces (vaulted), raised one above another, and resting upon cube-shaped pillars. These were hollow and filled with earth to allow trees of the largest size to be planted. The pillars, the vaults, and the terraces were built of burnt brick and asphalt. The ascent to the highest storey was by stairs, and nearby were water engines.”

After Nebuchadnezzar's death in 561 B.C., a number of kings ascended the throne, but being evil or unsatisfactory to the people, were assassinated by the courtiers. The choice of the courtiers and the priest then fell on Nabonidus, who was enthroned in 555 B.C. It is said that there being no direct heir left to the throne of Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus, a son of an exile Syrian princess, Nitocris, a favourite wife of Nebuchadnezzar was chosen by their people to be king. Herodotus states: “Thus in this curious manner a boy of Syrian origin, belonging to a family pledged to the worship of Sin of Harran, became the last king of Babylon after having been a captive in Babylon for nearly sixty years, for we do know that Nabonidus was a child at the time of the downfall of Harran in 610 B.C.”

Nabonidus was a great builder. His mother, Nitocris, had built palaces, made strong roads and erected huge fortifications. The only aim of Nabonidus seems to have been to see gods living more magnificently than before, and to raise old fallen temples to their former grandeur. Like an archaeologist, his sole desire was to go deep into the foundation of old temples, thus discovering the earliest underground structure. If the temple was rebuilt it was his prime pleasure to recover the record of the several kings, who had worked upon it. Thus, we owe much to his archaeological passion for the careful preservation of old records. On ascending to the throne, Nabonidus' first act was to repair the temple of Sin in Harran. He, therefore, towards the end of 555 B.C. made a secret treaty with Cyrus, who was then “King of Anshan” (Persis). In 553 B.C. Nabonidus set out for the invasion of Syrian Harran, leaving his son Belshazzar in charge of Babylon and the state. He met with little opposition and saw his dream being fulfilled in 552 B.C. The temple of Sin in Harran was restored.

In B.C. 550, Cyrus the King of Anshan deposed his grandfather Astyages and became the King of Media and Persis. We are now able to see that the Babylonian King Nabonidus was playing a double game. At the first possible moment after he became king, he made a secret treaty with Cyrus so that he could fulfil his personal aim undisturbed. When Cyrus became more powerful and overlord of Media, Nabonidus again made another secret treaty with Croesus of Lydia and Egypt to suppress him.

Nabonidus

THE MAP

The Map depicting Dawn of the Aryan Race

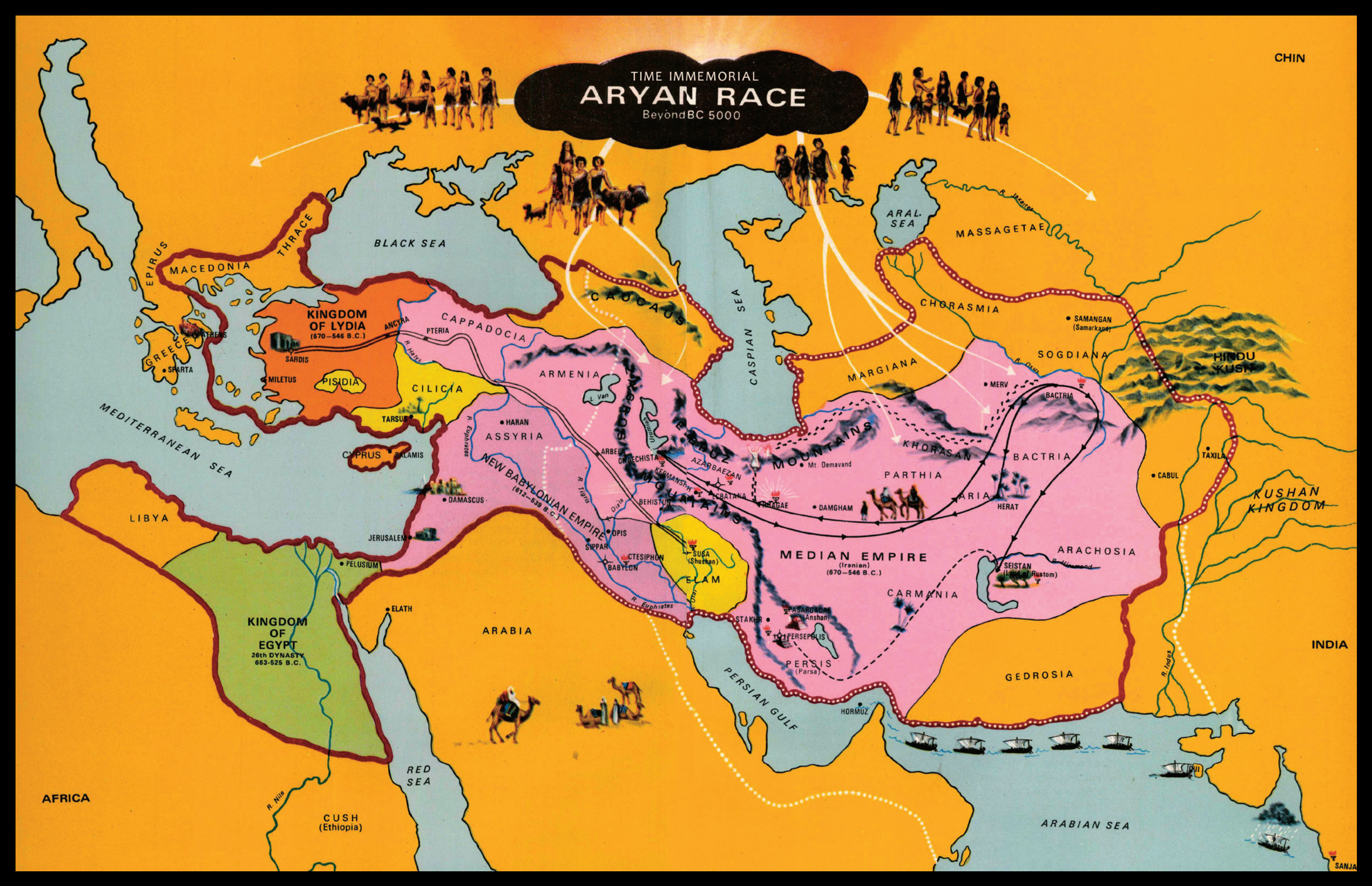
The Morning Calm

High Noon

Twilight

CHIN

TIME IMMEMORIAL
ARYAN RACE
Beyond BC 5000



INDIA

AFRICA

CUSH
(Ethiopia)

ARABIAN SEA

The Aryan Race appears on Earth

DAWN: The plateau of Iran is occupied and the Irani’s first profess the Ahuryan faith, later to be reformed into the Zoroastrian religion.

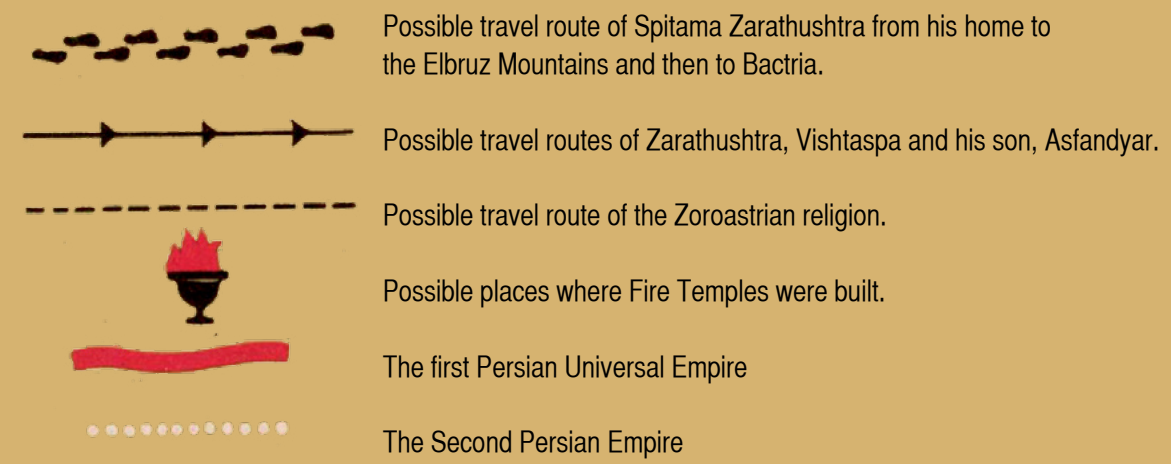
There is no idea of time, no idea of place, there is only a fierce, killing cold and an indomitable human will to survive foreshadowing the future tussles between man and his environment which were to take place again and again.

For 10, weary, bitterly cold months it was just ice and snow. Then one day, there is a suggestion of a slight warm breeze which flickers and fades. Again the next day, it is felt and slowly, the weak rays of the sun begin to gather strength. The freezing cold recedes and so for two months it becomes bearable for this hardy race. The blood in their veins begins to flow a little faster, and an urge to live takes hold of this mass of humanity. Slowly, like a herd of wild animals they begin to follow the path of the sun and move south, till winter strikes again and they freeze in their tracks. The place may have been the Nordic north or Lapland—the people, forerunners of the Aryan race. So the move to the warm south continued, till there came a time when this human race stood poised on the roof of the world, ready to move into their first homes.

No one seems to know when this took place—only one thing seems certain—it was beyond memory, beyond B.C. 5,000, maybe even beyond B.C. 10,000. And so this race began to settle in its first homes, in the mountains of Asia. It slowly spread to the west and southwest of the continent. One by one, its growing tribes separated. Some of them who penetrated to Europe were to become the Celts, the Thracians, the Latins, the Hellenes and the Slavs. At the same time, other no less important branches of the original stock, moving southwards, took with them a flourishing population, of which one group long remained connected with their motherland—the Scythians.

Another, having separated from them turned eastwards and became the progenitors of the Hindus. A third reached the lands of Central Asia, to give birth to the peoples whom the Greeks and Romans called the Persians, but who still use their original name, the Aryas (Noble Ones) of Aryana-Vaeja or Iranian. The Iranians were Ahuras, worshippers of fire. The legendary history of the Iranians is supposed to begin with Gayomard as the first man. A mixture of mythology and legend tells us that Iran was then ruled by the Peshdadian dynasty, the most famous of whom was Jamshid. This dynasty ends with Manuchehr and the Kianian dynasty begins. Towards the end of this dynasty appears Kai Vishtaspa during whose reign Zarathushtra proclaimed his religion.

Spitama Zarathushtra was born in the small town of Rhagae (Rae) in the Iranian province of Azarbaezan. At 15, being invested with the Kusti, he wandered into the Elbruz mountains to meditate for 10 long years on his Great God Ahuramazda. On receiving enlightenment, he made his way along the Caspian shores to the kingdom of Bactria ruled by Kai Vishtaspa of the Kianian Dynasty, whom he converted to the Zoroastrian faith. Thereafter, he moved to different parts of Iran and even as far as the shores of Lake Urumiah in western Azarbaezan. Vishtaspa himself took the religion to Seistan, the land of Rustam and his son, Asfandyar to other parts of Iran. After the Kianian Dynasty, the Zoroastrian religion was lost to history, but it lived amongst the Iranian people. Thousands of years later, it reappeared in Persis (Parsa) thousands of miles away from the ancient kingdom of Bactria.



The Classical Age

THE MORNING CALM: The Zoroastrian religion lives on amongst the tribes of Iran. (Median Empire).

The time is around B.C. 600. It was the classical age—the time of the Great Babylonian Empire, the Greek States, the Median Empire, and the 26th Egyptian Dynasty. Civilisation in all these countries had reached a high level, empires had crested their peaks and art, commerce and trade flourished. In fact, in some of the greatest nations a certain deterioration in the level of statesmanship was evident and they all hung like colourful, overripe fruits on the tree of abundance.

The first Persian Universal Empire

HIGH NOON: With the fame of the Achaemenian Dynasty, the Zoroastrian religion comes into prominence again.

A young and vigorous nation in Persis (Parsa), a vassal state of Media, stirs. A mere stripling of a man, a young unknown prince, galvanizes his people. The tree of abundance is shaken, the ripe fruits fall and within three decades, Cyrus, the Achaemenian, welds together a mighty empire of diverse nations, ruling its people with a tolerance and justice, hitherto unknown to them. With the rise of the Achaemenians, the Zoroastrian religion was again brought into world focus as also the first Persian Empire ruled by the Achaemenians.

The Second Persian Empire

TWILIGHT: With the Sassanian Dynasty the Zoroastrian religion becomes the state religion of Iran but with its fall, the Zoroastrian religion fades.

As the word implies, it is a moment after sunset. Darkness is yet to come, light persists, there are even moments of brilliance, and then darkness descends. This was the second Persian Empire ruled by the Sassanian Dynasty. The Zoroastrian religion again came into its own with the rise of the Sassanians. Religious fervour had risen to great heights and before long, the Sassanians declared the Zoroastrian religion as the state religion of Iran. In their religious zeal, much that was simple, true, beautiful and sublime was forgotten and was replaced by a mass of rituals and ceremonies. When the Sassanian Empire was destroyed, the Zoroastrian religion also fell and began to fade from this world.

Cyrus was nobody's fool and he knew full well that Nabonidus had made a secret treaty with Croesus to bring about his downfall. He ignored this betrayal and maintained an outward appearance of friendship and went about his arrangements to invade Lydia. Because of his treaty with Persis, Nabonidus could not invade Cyrus' territory directly and was forced to act stealthily. Even after the defeat of Lydia, Cyrus conquered more kingdoms in the rest of Asia till he acquired the stature and strength required to challenge Babylon, one of the mightiest empires remaining in Asia. Another reason why Cyrus was biding his time to attack Babylon was that after Nebuchadnezzar's death, Babylon was drifting towards its ruin, for there was no internal union—kings were assassinated, princes killed, subjects tyrannised and revolts and plots occurred in countless numbers. The Babylonian empire, the greatest empire in the world in Nebuchadnezzar's days, had now become a miserable remnant on the point of collapse. Cyrus was wise enough to realise that when ripe, the fruit would drop into his lap.

Cyrus diverts the waters of the Gyndes

The march of Cyrus against Babylon began in 540 B.C. It involved the diverting of the waters of the Gyndes, his stay on the banks of that river during the entire summer, the battle of Opis, the capture of Sippar, the battle outside Babylon, the siege of Babylon, the draining of the Euphrates and lastly the capture of Babylon itself. All this was accomplished by the end of 539 B.C. During the entire military action, the battles took place between Cyrus and Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus. The King of Babylon remained in the background, away from all fighting. At the head of his army Cyrus left Ecbatana, and soon arrived on the banks of the Gyndes, a branch of the Tigris. Herodotus furnishes us the following account: "Cyrus on his way to Babylon came to the banks of the Gyndes, a stream which rising in the Metanian mountains, runs through the country of the Dardanians, and empties into the river Tigris. The Tigris, after receiving Gyndes, flows on by the city of Opis, and discharges its waters into the Erythrian Sea. When Cyrus reached this stream, which could only be passed in boats, one of his sacred white horses, accompanying his march, full of spirit and mettle, walked into the stream, and tried to cross by himself, but the current seized him and swept him along with it, and drowned him in its depths."

At this Cyrus was very angry and vowed to make the current so weak and shallow that even women could cross it without wetting their knees. He therefore, delayed his expedition. He divided his army into two parts, and dug, on each side of the river, 180 canals into which he diverted the waters of the Gyndes. The whole summer of that year was occupied in this work. Cyrus then crossed the Diyala and the Tigris on foot after drawing off water from them; thus he was able to transport his vast army into the very centre of the enemy's position. What may have seemed an emotional outburst, possibly, was really a stroke of military genius, as Cyrus' main purpose must have been to avoid disclosure of his plan. For with the sudden crossing of the Gyndes by

Cyrus' army, it had cut off the principal Chaldean force from Babylon with the result that the Babylonian army was isolated at Opis. Cyrus then defeated this force on the banks of Zalzallat in the early days of Tammuz. The first notable success of Cyrus was the capture of Opis in the month of Tishri (September-October) in 539 B.C.

When Sippar heard of the defeat of the Babylonian army at Opis, the inhabitants thought it futile to continue the struggle, for Cyrus' reputation as a conqueror was known to them. Further, it is possible that the people of Sippar nourished a hatred for Nabonidus for one reason or the other, though the King had carried out extensive work (building) at this place. Some writers observe that Nabonidus was at this time in Sippar and that on hearing of his son's defeat at Opis, he evacuated it. Some days later, Sippar was taken without a battle. Then began the battle of Babylon. The Babylonians encamped outside Babylon, awaiting the arrival of Cyrus' army. A battle was fought at a short distance from the city in which Cyrus defeated the Babylonians. The Babylonians, thereupon, withdrew within their defences. "When Cyrus at the end of fifteen years arrived," says Rawlinson, "a single battle was fought, to try whether it was necessary to submit to a siege at all; and when victory was declared for the Persians, the Babylonians very contentedly retired within their defences, and thought to defy their enemy. Thenceforth, the mighty men of Babylon forebore to fight—they remained in their holds."

The defeated Babylonians retired within their defences, the strength of which bade defiance to the enemy, while the ample provisions within, and the fertile soil made them so secure that no second effort seemed to have been made by the Babylonians to drive away the assailants. Thus Babylon, the mighty city of the ancient world, was besieged by the Persians. When Cyrus arrived at Babylon, he ordered his army to encamp all round the city. Accompanied by his generals and allies, he rode round the city. Time passed, and each day added to Cyrus' discomfort. He was greatly perplexed when he found himself making no progress against the defences. He then called a meeting of his generals and allies saying, "Friends and allies, we have taken a view of the city and are unable to see how any enemy can take walls of such strength and height by assault. However, with the great number of people within the city, famine should soon bring them to their knees. Therefore unless you have some other method to propose, I think that the people must be besieged and taken by that means. . . . " Thereupon Chrysantas said, "Does not this river (Euphrates), that is above two stadia in breadth, run through the midst of the city?" Gobryas his General replied, "Yes, indeed, and is of so great a depth, that two men, one standing upon the other, would not reach above the water, so that the city is still better defended by the river than by its walls."

The battle for Babylon

Cyrus then said, "Chrysantas, let us think no more of what is beyond our power, it must be our business, as soon as possible, to dig as broad and deep a trench as we can, measuring out the proper proportion for each division, so that we may want the fewer men to keep guard." Measuring out, accordingly, the ground around the wall, and leaving a space by the side of the river sufficiently to hold large towers, he dug on each side of the wall very deep trenches and the men threw up earth towards themselves on that side of the trench which was towards their own camp, and not on the side which was towards the city. He then made towers upon the bank of the river, laying their foundations with palm trees not less than a 100 feet in length. This he did merely to represent to the people within that he was preparing to blockade the city. Here can be seen Cyrus the tactician, for even as Chrysantas spoke about the Euphrates, a plan had formed in his mind and without revealing the shift in his strategy, he began to set his new plan into motion.

He built a great many turrets upon the rampart of earth in order that he might have as many places as were proper for his watch. Thus the forces of Cyrus seemed to be occupied. The Babylonians laughed at this blockade as they were furnished with provisions for more than twenty years. On being informed of this, Cyrus beguiled them still further and divided his whole army into twelve parts, each part told to keep guard for one month. When those within the walls heard of this guard they laughed still more, for their hearts were at rest and life passed as if nothing unusual had happened. In the meanwhile the Persians went on steadily digging their trenches.

Then came the day that Cyrus awaited. This was the day of the festival, when all Babylonians drank and revelled the whole night. When darkness fell, Cyrus called upon his multitude of 'unwarlike' (cooks, camel drivers, etc.) men and dug out the space of land between the river (near the tower) and the trenches, then went to the place where Nitocris had dug the basin for the river, where he did exactly what Nitocris had done before; he diverted the waters of the Euphrates by means of his trenches into the basin, which was a marsh. The result of this was that the river sank to such an extent as to make the natural bed of the river fordable. The Persian army at once crossed the stream, and entered the city without any loss.

Before the operation began, Cyrus ordered the whole army to come before him and addressed them as follows: "We have torches in abundance, that will presently take fire; we have plenty of pitch and tow, that will soon raise a strong flame, so that the people must of necessity flee from their houses at once, or be burnt. . . Come then take your arms, and with the help of God, I will lead you on." Then calling Gobryas and Gadatas, he said, "You, Gobryas, and Gadatas, show us the ways, for you are acquainted with them, and when we are in, conduct us by the readiest approach to the palace." They replied, "Indeed, it would not at all be wonderful if the doors of the palace were open, for the whole city seems tonight to be in a revel;

but we shall meet with a guard in front of the gates, for there is always one placed there."

Swiftly they marched down the bed of the Euphrates and entered the city through the gates of the roads that crossed the river, as most of them had been thrown open by the revellers. Those whom they met were either killed or struck down and some fled and raised shouts. Those who were with Gobryas joined with the revellers, as if they themselves were revellers, but marched sharply towards the palace. The gates of the palace were shut and the guards idle before them and within minutes, the guardians of the royal Babylonian family were cut down. Those within the palace hearing great shouts outside thought a brawl was taking place between the guards, and Belshazzar who was within, ordered his soldiers to attend to them. When the gates of the palace were opened to stop the fight amongst the guards, the soldiers of Gadatas and Gobryas swarmed into the palace killing and wounding all those who came before them. In the fight that ensued to take over the palace, Balshazzar the gallant son and war-arm of the Babylonian King Nabonidus was slain. In this manner Babylon was taken. When morning came, many in the wider reaches of the city did not even know that the army had surrendered, the palace taken and the war lost.

The moment the Persians were in possession of Babylon, strict orders issued by Cyrus were obeyed by the victorious army. It maintained complete discipline, avoided excesses, respected property, temples, and specially protected the richly adorned temple of Esagila from plunder until Cyrus had determined the fate of the fallen. He then made a proclamation to the Babylonians intimating them to surrender all their arms, and to remain in their respective houses, with a decree of killing any that were found out in the streets. Cyrus then ordered the Persians to restore the dead to their relatives so that they might perform the funeral rites before burying them. The Babylonians, accordingly, brought out all their arms, and Cyrus ordered them to be deposited in a tower. A general grant of amnesty was accorded at the earnest request of the priests and nobles of Babylon. Cyrus directed the Magi to be present and on their arrival he ordered them to select the first fruits of the spoil for their Great God with certain portions of ground for sacred use. Cyrus then distributed houses and palaces to those who had distinguished themselves during the campaign and were worthy of such gifts. He presented various items according to the qualifications of the receiver. Cyrus ordered the Babylonians to cultivate their land; to pay their taxes, and to serve those under whom they were placed. The Persians were allowed to take Babylonians as their slaves. Cyrus thought it expedient to establish a sufficient garrison in Babylon, and for this he appointed a military unit of chosen guards. The Babylonians were called upon to supply these men not only with the necessities of life but also to pay them. Cyrus then appointed different officers for different departments of state. The procession in which Cyrus first marched has been vividly described by Xenophon and which follows.

Cyrus enters Babylon

“But we shall now relate how Cyrus, for the first time, marched in procession out of the palace; for the Majesty of the procession seems to me to have been one of those arts that made his government not to be despised.... On the morrow, everything was fairly arranged before daylight, there were rows of troops standing on each side of the way, as they stand at this day, whenever the king is to ride forth; and within these rows none but men of high rank are allowed to come; and there were men posted with scourges in their hands, who struck any that made a disturbance. . . These stood in front, before the gates, 4000 of the guards drawn up four deep; and 2000 on each side of the gates. . . .

“The cavalry was also in attendance, having alighted from their horses, and with their hands passed through their robes, as they still pass them at this day when the king takes a view of them The Persians stood on the right hand, and the other allies on the left side of the way. The chariots, in the same manner, stood half of them on each side

“When the gates of the palace were thrown open, there were first led forth some very beautiful bulls four abreast. Next to the bulls, there were horses led for sacrifice to the Sun. After this was led forth a chariot with white horses, with golden yoke on their necks, crowned with the leaves of the oak or the olive tree, and after this another chariot with white horses crowned like the preceding. After this a third chariot was led forth, its horses adorned with scarlet coverings, and behind it followed men carrying fire upon a large altar (the sacred fire, supposed to have fallen from heaven)

“After this Cyrus made his appearance in his chariot from the gates, with his tiara upright on his head, and a vest of purple colour, half mixed with white, and having on his legs loose trousers of a scarlet colour, and a robe wholly purple. He had also a band round his turban; and his relatives had likewise this mark of distinction, and retain it to this day. . . .

“His hands he kept out of the sleeves of his robe. With him rode his driver, a tall man, but shorter than himself, whether in reality, or from whatever cause, but Cyrus certainly appeared much the taller. All the people on seeing him, paid adoration, either from some having been before appointed to begin it, or from being struck with pomp, and thinking that Cyrus appeared tall and handsome; but no Persian ever paid Cyrus adoration before. . . .

“When the chariot of Cyrus advanced, the 4000 guards preceded it, and the 2000 attended on each side of it. The wand-bearers about his person followed on horseback, splendidly equipped, with javelins in their hands, to the number of about 300

“Next were led the horse kept for Cyrus himself, with bits of gold, covered with stripe cloths, in number about 200. Next to these marched 2000 spearmen; next to these the first-formed body of horse, 10,000

in number, ranged in a square of a 100 on each side; and Chrysantas had the command of them

“Next to these another body of 10,000 Persian horses, ranged in like manner, and of these Darius Hystaspas had the command. Next to these another body of 10,000 drawn up in the same manner; these Datamas led. Next to these followed another body of cavalry whom Gadatas commanded....

“After these marched the Median cavalry; after these the Armenian; then the Hyrcanian; then the Caducians; then the Sacians. Behind the cavalry went the chariots, ranged four abreast; and Artabates, a Persian, had the command of them.”

Cyrus adopted the palace of the Babylonian Kings as his own. He considered Babylon as one of the capitals of his vast empire. He always treated Susa and Ecbatana as important as before. In Babylon, he received the tribute and homage of “all the kings dwelling in palaces of all the quarters of the earth from the Upper to the Lower Sea—all the Kings of the West land dwelling in tents.” He appointed Ugbaru as Governor of Babylon and sometimes his son Cambyses ruled over Babylon in his absence. Cyrus assumed the double title of “King of Babylon, King of the Lands.”

After the Persian conquest, Babylonia formed a satrapy of the Persian Empire; while Babylon was one of the royal residences, ranking as the second in the kingdom. Babylon underwent very little change under the Achaemenian kings of Persia. The administration mostly continued to be on the same lines. Aramaean was still the official language. The only change was the placing of Persians at the head of public offices. The Babylonians possessed in Cyrus a legitimate sovereign since he had “taken the hand of Bell” and with this act declared himself protector of the Babylonian God. They, therefore, considered him to be conquered rather than they being conquered. Three weeks after the fall of the city, commercial transactions were begun in the name of the new conqueror. Under Cyrus, the Persians had become a privileged class and as such wielded great power. The whole empire was divided into satrapies. Each satrapy covered a large area, with three officers presiding over it. The satrap proper had entire charge over the civil administration; the military commander was responsible to the king only, and it developed upon the secretary to keep the king informed of the actions of the other two.

Each satrapy was divided into twenty districts for the purpose of revenue. The orders of the satrap and his military attache were first to be accepted by the secretary before becoming valid. Thus the king established a balance of power under his complete control. Special inspectors were sent by the king from time to time and often he would appear in person at different places unexpectedly. These satraps were selected with the greatest care and a special school

existed at the Persian court where preferably Persian noblemen were trained for this high office. If a satrap was related to the royal family he possessed a greater degree of power than wielded by other satraps. The responsibilities of the satraps were great at all times. Their first and foremost function was to guard the interests of the whole empire and at the same time to promote the welfare of the subject people. The king showed no patience with any one who failed to accomplish this double object.

Cyrus found among his new Babylonian subjects an oppressed race, in whose religion he recognised a considerable resemblance to his own. He regarded the Jews with special favour as monotheists, which he showed by allowing them to return to their country to rebuild their temple and city. This humane act of Cyrus was the first after his conquest of Babylon. Being a God-fearing man he saw that no single race should exist as captive in his dominions. Whether the prayers and blessings of the Jews were in any way instrumental in bringing the actual success or not is not of such great importance as the first act of imperial power performed by Cyrus. Before long King Nabonidus of Babylon surrendered to Cyrus and as was the practice of the Persian king, no indignity was placed on him. Nabonidus retired to the province of Carmania and lived out his days in peace.

Having now acquired a dominion far more extensive than had ever before been known in the world, the wisdom of Cyrus' remaining years was employed to model the many nations, subject to him, into one regular empire. As has been often the case with great warriors the death of Cyrus, just like his birth, is shrouded in myth. The cause of his death is still unascertained. As legends are webbed around his coming, so are they circulated around his passing. Like Napoleon, Cyrus seems to have been dissatisfied with the conquest of Babylon and looked further for more lands to conquer. We have again to rely on an account of the manner of his death to Herodotus.

Cyrus and Queen Tomyris

After the conquest of Babylon, Cyrus turned his attention to the subjugation of the Massagetae. These people were ruled by a queen named Tomyris. The reason for Cyrus' march against Tomyris sounds very peculiar. Herodotus says that Cyrus demanded the hand of Queen Tomyris in marriage but was refused. This queen was brave and chivalrous, and was in possession of a vast army. She took the assault of Cyrus as child's play and sent her only son to drive away the Persians from her dominions. A great battle took place in which Tomyris' son was killed. When this news was brought to Tomyris, she was enraged and vowed either to capture or kill the Persian conqueror. She put on her armour, and at the head of a fresh army marched bravely into the lines of Cyrus. It is but natural that an army might prove victorious under such a leader, and especially when the latter belonged to the opposite sex. The Persians found it very difficult to check the

onslaught of the opposing army. Queen Tomyris, herself, directed the assault on Cyrus and his line. The whole Persian army was routed and Cyrus, the Persian Napoleon of that age, fell in the battle, fought beyond the Jaxartes, in the Steppes of Turkistan.

We are not certain as to the truth of the statement but we conjecture that Cyrus most probably fell in a battle against Asiatic barbarians on the Indian frontier. Cyrus died in his 71st year. His remains were brought by his son to Pasargadae and buried there. The location of the classic Pasargadae is now accepted to have been on the plain of Murghab, about six miles from a present small settlement called Meshad-i- Murghab.

The tomb stands high upon a terraced base, seven steps of which are now visible, and the stones which compose both the substructure and the tomb are very massive. The lowest stage of the seven terraced steps is a plinth over two feet high, nearly 50 feet long and more than 50 feet broad. Each of the other stages above this flooring is proportionately smaller in area but not in height, and the combined elevation of the pedestal thus formed is more than nearly 35 feet from the ground; the length of the building is about 20 feet and its width 17 feet. The entrance to the tomb is low and narrow. The height of the door-way is only about 4 feet and its width approximately 2 1/2 feet. It is said that in this stone house, the body of Cyrus was laid in a golden coffin that rested upon (or beside) a couch, the feet of which were of hammered gold. Under this decorated stage carpets of royal purple were spread, and over it was laid a covering of Babylonian tapestry, while around it were lying rich vestments of purple and other colours, costly jewels and precious stones.

Outside and around the tomb are 24 large monolithic columns, and on bas-reliefs are sculptured the almost deified image of the king, represented as the Persians depicted spirits glorified in another life and admitted to sit with the Ameshaspentas and heavenly Yazats; it is furnished with four large wings. Over his head hovers the image of the Fravashi. A short inscription is added to the figure in these words, "I am Cyrus, the king, the Achaemenian." On the tomb itself Plutarch states that the inscription reads as follows:

"O man, whoever thou art and wheresoever thou comest, (for I know that thou shalt come), I am Cyrus who founded the Empire of the Persians grudge me not therefore this little earth that covers my body."

As anticipated by Cyrus, a man did appear before his tomb. This man was Alexander, the Macedon, another great conqueror like himself. When Alexander's General Aristobulus entered it at his command, the tomb had been despoiled and emptied. Alexander was outraged and tears appeared in his eyes at the dishonour done to a great soldier and king. He, therefore, ordered the inside of the tomb to be put back in order and closed up the entrance with a stone cemented with mortar and sealed it with his own signet.



The Greatness of Cyrus

Cyrus was a military genius and a statesman who did not squander his virility through luxury and self-indulgence, like many ancient and modern great men. As a military leader he could be compared with Nebuchadnezzar or Napoleon; as an administrator he outshines by far those two monarchs. Though for years he never descended from his chariot of war, his conquests did not brutalise him; but after subjecting his opponents he chivalrously extended to them the hand of friendship and thus dissolved their feelings of enmity. A fresh wind blew across the world, carrying away the cries of murdered victims, extinguishing the fires of sacked cities and liberating nations from slavery. This was the result of the policies pursued by Cyrus. He was upright, and we never see him, like the Romans, ally himself with a rival people, treat them as equals, and then turn upon them in a moment of weakness to subject and oppress them. He was “father” to the Persians; the Hellenes, whom he conquered regarded him as “master” and “law-giver”, and the Jews as “the Anointed of the Lord”. A great captain and leader of men, he was generous and benevolent. He did not force conquered countries into a

single mould, and had the wisdom to leave unchanged the institutions of each kingdom he attached to the Persian Crown. Wherever he went he acknowledged and honoured the gods of different religions, and invariably represented himself as the successor of the native rulers.

Writing in Babylon, he himself says: “Marduk had visited all the land in search of an upright prince, a king after his own heart, whom he took by the hand. He named his name ‘Cyrus of Anshan’, and to the kingdom of the whole world he called me by name.” Cyrus conceived of Iran as a state, and turned that concept into reality. Its survival no less than its independence, was his legacy to posterity. This architect of the universal state was a simple man. Few kings have left so noble a reputation as Cyrus. He had spent most of his life campaigning in the east and the west, and had little time for other activities, such as urban development. His subsequent capitals, Ecbatana and Babylon, were used by him at different times. He built Pasargadae, according to tradition, on the site of his decisive victory over Astyages. The name means “the camp of the Persians”.

It was indeed a vast camp surrounded by walls, within which, amid parks and gardens, rose palaces and temples. The entrance to the park was flanked by two-winged genii. The great audience chamber is decorated with orthostats showing priests bringing animals for sacrifice

and genii with eagles' claws. The columns are surmounted by horses, bulls and lions. Elsewhere the columns were of wood, brightly coloured in blue, green, red, and yellow. On the doorposts the king is depicted carrying a sceptre, with part of his clothing inlaid with gold. A fire temple in the form of a square tower is identical with that which stands in front of the tomb of Darius at Naksh-i-Rustam. Some distance away are two stepped fire altars around which religious ceremonies took place in the open air.

Pasargadae is an impressive manifestation of Persian art. In a sense it is composite, with its Assyrian and Urtian winged bulls, Hittite orthostats, Babylonian polychromy, and Egyptian symbols. Yet fundamentally it reflects a national culture of a high order, in which all foreign influences have been recast and transposed in a coherent and balanced manner, making it a new art. The artists have introduced the use of alternating white and black stone in appreciation of the play of colours in sunlight and shadow. We see a notable advance in the treatment of folds of draperies and in the representation of the human form. Each detail, whether original or of foreign provenance, is infused with Iranian spirit, and for many scholars the art of Pasargadae is an even greater achievement than that of Persepolis.

Darius the Great King Darius the Great became King of the Achaemenian empire twelve years after Cyrus' demise. Cambyses, Cyrus' eldest son had ruled in the intervening years, ascending the throne after killing his younger brother, Bardiya, in a dispute. Temperamentally unlike his father, Cambyses' sole triumph was the conquest of Egypt, which had been planned by Cyrus. He had charted on paper three other conquests, two of which were never undertaken and the third was partially unsuccessful. However, in the course of his expedition against Ammon, the Greeks of Libya, Cyrene and Barka submitted to him, and part of the Greek world thus came under the Persian yoke. While Cambyses was on his Ethiopian expedition, a revolt erupted in Persia itself, sparked by the pretender Gaumata, the Magian, also known as the false Bardiya or Smerdes.

Gaumata physically resembled Bardiya, the king's dead brother. Surprisingly, all the provinces of the empire embraced him as the new ruler. It is conjectured that Cambyses on being informed of the revolt had an epileptic fit, accidentally wounded himself or committed suicide. Darius was the son of Hystaspa, the grandson of Arsames. Legend tells us that seven young nobles headed by Darius decided to oust Gaumata, and later imprisoned and executed him. Darius who claimed legitimate descent from Achaemenes himself, was elected to replace him.

For the first two years of his reign the young king struggled to clamp down revolts which had broken out in the Achaemenian state, fighting nineteen battles and defeating nine kings. To commemorate his victory, he had a massive bas-relief etched on a high cliff on the road between Kermanshah and Hamadan at Behistan, portraying him as a protege of the great God Ahuramazda whose symbol emerges from a winged sun-disc (the Fravashi). The king followed by two arms bearers, squashes underfoot the prone body of the false Bardiya. Behind him, bound to a long rope stand eight "false kings". Around this scene is carved on several columns the story of the king's victory over the revolt. The inscription in Old Persian, Babylonian and Elamite, hails Darius as the ninth Achaemenian king. This number includes both branches of the dynasty—that of Achaemenes, Teispes, Cyrus I, Cambyses I, Cyrus II and Cambyses II on the one hand, and Ariarammes and Arsames on the other—which tallies with other known records. "Ahuramazda and other gods helped me", said Darius. The new king invoked the aid of the great God and presented himself as the legitimate successor of Cambyses II, who had died without an issue.

Darius' extraordinary military achievements included the unification of the Achaemenian empire from Egypt to the River Jaxartes with the aid of a small faithful army. Though young, the king had had considerable military experience. He had fought in the expedition which cost Cyrus his life, and with Cambyses when the latter was on his Egyptian campaign. As a token of his gratitude to the Ten Thousand Immortals who had supported him in his efforts to knit the empire together, Darius had their representations sculpted in stone or depicted in colour on enamelled brickwork in each new palace erected whether at Susa or Persepolis. Though a great military genius, historically he was better known as a great administrator, law-giver and builder of the magnificent urban civilisations which flowered under Achaemenian tutelage.

Darius evolved a new administrative system after analysing the shortcomings of Cyrus' "over-liberal" policy. He established the state on more solid foundations, for the revolt in the empire had convinced him that he could only rely on the loyalty of the Persians.

They must therefore govern all the countries included in the empire. A policy of force in any event, would have been impractical, since the ruling people were in an obvious minority. A statesmanlike policy was essential; each nation was to preserve its own identity—its language, its individuality, its institutions and its religion and to enjoy the benefits of the state of which it formed a part. But the state could be run only by a Persian chosen by the Great King. The whole empire was therefore divided into twenty provinces, each under a satrap or "protector of the kingdom" who was directly accountable to the king. The principle of satrapy was undoubtedly conceived and evolved by Cyrus, and followed by Cambyses. Darius applied it to the empire and organised it on a new basis.

The Royal road

Darius aimed at establishing a centralised and powerful nation state out of the several countries, provinces and lands which had been merged. He therefore had to replace the form of government set up by Cyrus. His administrative and fiscal organisation respected national rights and imposed a semblance of unity. The universal state could not function merely within a political framework. Large kingdoms had existed before the Achaemenian universal state. However, they were not empires nor did they survive for more than a generation. Darius was the first monarch to grasp the importance of a technological policy to knit the empire. He therefore laid a network of transport and communications, with roads that spanned the length and breadth of his empire, from Thrace to the western parts of India. Intended primarily for administrative purposes, the roads also facilitated and boosted caravan trade throughout the empire. The Royal Road snaked from Susa across the Tigris below Arbella, skirted Harran and ended at Sardis, and was extended to Ephesus. One thousand six hundred and seventy-seven miles long, it was divided into 111 post stations, each with relays of fresh horses for the royal couriers. According to ancient historians, the caravans took 90 days to traverse this road from end to end, while the royal envoys covered it in a week. The old route that linked Babylon with Egypt via Xarchemish was improved and connected with another leading from Babylon to Holwan, Behistan and Hamadan (Ecbatana). This road was extended to the valley of the upper Kabul whence, following the river, it reached the valley of the Indus. Within the country, shorter roads but equally indispensable were built such as the road joining Susa and Persepolis, of which part of the stone-paved surface can still be seen near Bebahan. The roads were not only a part of the imperial structure of the Achaemenians, but were also their gift to the ancient east, since generations trod on them for many centuries after the Achaemenians.

Darius realised that an empire needed a legal framework. Scholars who have perused the numerous texts left by him in many places at Behistan and Persepolis, at Susa and Naksh-i-Rustam, have identified a number of parallels between his writings and the ancient code of Hammurabi. These official texts copied on stelae, tablets or papyrus, were sent to all the main provincial centres of the empire.

An exceptional feature of the judicial system established by Darius, and which was recorded by Herodotus, laid down that the royal judges chosen from among the Persians held office until their death unless they were removed for miscarriage of justice. It was they who judged cases, interpreted national laws, and arbitrated in all disputes. The vanquished, though members of the universal state retained their own legal system as decreed by Cyrus, side by side with that of Darius. Darius was a true law-giver, always emphasising truth and justice, as seen in several of his inscriptions.

An essential part of Darius' philosophy was the spirit of nationalism, hitherto unknown in ancient, oriental empires. This sentiment of nationalism did not exclude the well-being of other countries whose destinies the Great King directed at the behest of his Supreme God. The philosophy of the Great King was partly a manifestation of the reality. The Persian people were mighty patriotic and Herodotus had remarked that no Persian ever prayed to his God for personal benefit. "But he prays for the welfare of the king and of the whole Persian people, among whom he is of necessity included. This patriotic ideal inspired and developed a national conscience in the fulfilment of the imperial task that was a part of the nation's destiny."

The philosophical-religious basis of the Achaemenian civilisation was typically Persian, and there are few similarities in ancient civilisations. Ahuramazda was the Great God, the creator of all, the benefactor of every living creature. It was He who guided the king on whom He had conferred power. The Achaemenian conquests were divinely sanctioned. Persia of the Achaemenians was not a theocratic state as was the case with the Abbasid Caliphs. Although Darius derived his power from God Himself, he was not bowed under a doctrinaire religion. There was no imperial cult but the mere fact that the king had been placed on the throne by the will of Ahuramazda bound the Persian world together.

We know of three temples of the Achaemenian period: one at Pasargadae built by Cyrus, another at Naksh-i-Rustam in front of the tomb of Darius and probably built by him and a third at Susa, apparently dating from the time of Artaxerxes II. Each is in the form of a square tower enclosing a single room reached by a stairway and here the Magi tended the Sacred Fire. Religious ceremonies apparently took place in the open, for all the altars known to us are in the country side, some distance away from the temples. All the bas-reliefs above the Achaemenian tombs represent the prince sacrificing before the altar with the Sacred Fire, and above him is a winged disc, representing the Fravashi. The same figure is on the basreliefs of Behestan and on certain monuments at Persepolis.

Darius moved his capital from Babylon to Susa, probably in 521 B.C. On the Acropolis he erected a strong citadel. The palace at Susa had hardly been completed when Darius decided to build another residence at Persepolis in his native Parsa. At Persepolis, a great terrace with its back to the mountain was partly hewn out of the rock and partly constructed on large blocks of stone joined by iron clamps fixed with molten lead, a type of construction already adopted by his predecessors. A defensive wall of unbaked brick followed the contour of the terrace fairly high up on the hillside in order to protect the rear. A great staircase with a double turn gave access to the esplanade, whence two further flights led to the apadana. This was a replica of the one built at Susa, since the same artists who worked at Susa were brought to Persepolis.

The cedar-wood ceiling was borne by seventy-two fluted columns as in Susa. They were about sixty-five feet in height, and were crowned by a procession of bulls, lions and horned lions. A long sculpted line of Immortals embellish, as in the palace at Susa, the sides of the staircase. They are followed by a line of courtiers, both Medes and Persians. Finally, on the sides of the two staircases is carved a train of subject nations carrying gifts: Achaemenian art depicted on the one hand, the power of the king, and on the other, the diversity of people within the empire, but was ornamental as well. The artists of the age were consummate in animal portraiture and the style under Darius is distinguished by clarity, balance, power and firmness.

The Grecian contact with Achaemenian civilisation began in the time of Cyrus with Iranian supremacy over the Greek cities of Asia Minor. Cyrus vanquished them and demarcated them

into satrapies. The Ionian satrapy was merged with Sardis and he formed another which was named "Those of the Sea". However, from the beginning the encounter was not exclusively military. The Achaemenians had hired Greek mercenaries and professionals.

Indeed, the sway of the Great King over the Greek world was so profound that Athens inclined towards the recognition of Persian sovereignty, and to this end sent an embassy to Sardis. The perennial quarrel between Athens and Sparta featured in the diplomacy of the Achaemenians. It is ironical that the Great King was supported by the democrats of Athens, and he worked towards the restoration of democracy in Greece. Had his Median admiral, Datis, not committed a grave error and antagonised the pro-Persian element, he would have succeeded in dividing Athens, and perhaps the outcome of the battle of Marathon would have been different.



Athens in flames The major conflict with Persia, from the Greek point of view, arose in the time of Xerxes, Darius' successor, who led a campaign against Greece. Thessaly and Macedonia fell without resistance. The northern Greeks submitted. Thus, together with the Greeks of Asia and Africa, more than half the Greek world had been subjugated. The Athenian democrats were trying to iron out their differences with the Persians, and they would have done so but for the intervention of Sparta. This is the context in which the battle was fought at the pass of Thermopylae. The result was indecisive. Its consequences were very severe for the Greeks because the Persians captured Athens and the defence of the Acropolis ended in a general conflagration which razed everything—men, temples, and houses. The Greeks wreaked their revenge at the battle of Salamis.

In the time of Artaxerxes I the encounter continued. This was the Age of Pericles in Athens which supported Egypt in its revolt against the Persians. The Persians disposed off the Athenian fleet in the Nile delta. During the reign of Artaxerxes I the military aspect of the Persian-Greek encounter was overshadowed by the cultural exchange between the Persians and the Greek. Greek historians and men of science traversed Egypt, Babylonia and Iran, acquiring knowledge of the history, religions and sciences of the east. This was also the age of the historian Herodotus who was born a Persian subject.

Darius II re-established suzerainty of the Persians over the Greek cities, and since the satrap of Sardis, who had rebelled against the Great King, had allied himself with Athens, Sparta sided with the Persians on this occasion. The Sardis revolt was stamped by the Persians with the help of Greek mercenaries. Having signed a treaty with Sparta, the King waged war on Athens and captured several Greek cities, compelling them to accept Persian garrisons and to pay arrears of tribute. Shortly afterwards, a new treaty recognised the supremacy of the Great King over the Greeks of Asia.

Revolt of Sparta During the reign of Artaxerxes II, Sparta rose in revolt against the Persians. Immediately, Athens went over to the side of the Persians. Agesilaus, the Spartan leader, led an expedition into Asia Minor, but was recalled home before any decisive victories were won. It was also during Artaxerxes' reign that the famous "peace of the king" was proclaimed from the Persian capital which determined not only the position of the Ionian Greeks, but also those of the mainland. The Greek ambassadors, before whom the royal decision was read, bowed their heads. Artaxerxes had achieved what even Darius and Xerxes had failed at. Finally, after Artaxerxes II had made his empire stronger than at any time since Darius, he brought the Greeks totally under the Persian sway.

Philip of Macedonia launched his career during this period. He established an alliance with the Greek city states to fight the Persians. We may note in passing that Demosthenes violently opposed this Macedonian policy, seeing the salvation of his country in an alliance with the Great King.

Darius III, known as Codomannus ascended the Iranian throne and was the last of the Achaemenians. He dispatched his ambassadors to Macedonia to exact the customary tribute. At that time 20-year old Alexander (born in 356 B.C.) had succeeded his father, Philip of Macedon. When Darius' ambassadors demanded the customary tribute, Alexander refused to pay it. Early in the spring of 334 B.C. Alexander mustered his army and crossed the Hellespont. The supremely confident Persians decided upon a pitched battle on land, but Alexander inflicted a great defeat on them.

Darius eventually abandoned the policy of his dead General Mennon, of defence by sea, and launched an offensive measure by land. He had drawn from various parts of the empire a considerable force; a battle took place near Tarsus on the banks of the Issus, in the province of Cilicia. Unfortunately, Darius sustained a severe defeat and his wife, mother, two daughters and a son, fell into the victor's hands (B.C. 333). After his flight from the battlefield of Issus, Darius worked unremittingly to band together an army for the final struggle to preserve his country's independence. Such were the immense resources of the empire yet, that he was able to levy and fully equip an army superior in number and more effectively armed than that which had fought at Issus. A spacious and perfectly flat plain in the neighbourhood of Gaugamela, about 30 miles west of the city of Arbella, was chosen by Darius as the field of battle. But here again the battle ended in complete disaster for the Persians (1st October 331 B.C.). Alexander rushed straight towards Darius, who left the field for safety. At the "Persian Gates" the formidable pass leading up to Persepolis, the satrap Ariobarzanes made a stout attempt to bar Alexander's progress towards Persis. Alexander's frontal attack was repulsed and he had to return to his camp, after sustaining losses and without doing any damage to the defenders. Unfortunately, a Lykian captive slave acquainted him with the existence of a track, known only to himself, which brought Alexander in the night with a small mobile force to the rear of the Persians, whom he took unawares.

It was after this that the sack, destruction and burning of Persepolis and its libraries by Alexander took place. Throughout history it has been maintained that this was a wanton act committed by Alexander during a drunken spell and instigated by a mistress. Most have accepted this point. Another view which has never been considered is that the act of burning Persepolis and destroying the libraries holding the entire works of Zarathushtra was deliberate and the result of a well thought-out scheme. No one can gainsay that Alexander was a military genius, he had a fine tactical mind and throughout the Persian campaign all his movements were deliberate and highly successful.

"O MAN, WHOSOEVER THOU ART,
AND WHERESOEVER THOU COMETH,
FOR I KNOW THOU WILT COME,
I AM CYRUS. WHO FOUNDED THE EMPIRE
OF THE PERSIANS. GRUDGE ME NOT THEREFORE,
THIS LITTLE EARTH THAT COVERS MY BODY."

"I AM CYRUS, the King, The Achaemenian"
Adam Kurush Khshayathiya Hakhamanishya



For centuries the Persians were a thorn in the side of the European Greeks. Again and again they had hammered at the gates of Europe and each time the Greeks had been barely able to push back the invaders. To a genius like Alexander, it must have been clear that the back-bone of the Persian nation was the Zoroastrian religion and that for the Persians, their king was the lord’s anointed. He carried the sword for Ahuramazda. All his acts were by the grace of Ahuramazda. Further the Zoroastrian religion was a living force for the Persians. The king, as said earlier was only fulfilling Ahuramazda’s divine command. Therefore an astute mind like Alexander’s could well have come to a decision —destroy the Zoroastrian religion at its root and you destroy the Persian nation and for all times remove a serious threat. Hence the plan to burn Persepolis and in the process burn the libraries with every text that contained anything about Zarathushtra and his teachings; even the librarians and the priests were not spared. It was a thorough piece of work — too thorough for a drunken spree.

Lastly, Alexander may well have been drunk that night. If the wanton destruction of Cyrus’ tomb could bring a tear to his eyes and if he was chivalrous enough to cover the dead Darius Codomannus with his cloak and honour him with a royal funeral, then of necessity a sensitive man needs to be drunk, to be able to look on the vandalism of his men as they burnt down one of the greatest Holy Scriptures the world had the good fortune to receive. And finally, down the ages it has provided Alexander with a cloak to hide his shame. From Persepolis Alexander secured the enormous amount of 120,000 talents, equivalent to £27,600,000 and so much other valuable booty, that 10,000 two-mule carts and 5000 camels were required to transport it.

The helpless Persian monarch fled from Ecbatana to Rhagae with the intention of crossing through the Caspian Gates, to escape from the Macedonian victor. Eight days after he quitted Ecbatana, Alexander entered it. Leaving Ecbatana in charge of Parmenio, with a strong garrison, Alexander hurried to overtake Darius before he crossed the Gates, but when he reached Rhagae he learnt that the fugitive had already passed through them.

The last and most unfortunate of Achaemenian kings had escaped capture by his Macedonian adversary, only to fall to the daggers of two of his satraps, Bassus, satrap of Bactria, and Barsaentes, satrap of Drangiana and Arachosia. Just as Alexander reached the chariot in which the murderous traitors had left their king, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Damghan, 200 miles east of Rhagae, Darius breathed his last. Alexander undoing his own cloak, cast it upon the body of the last of the heirs of Cyrus and Darius, and ordered him a suitable royal burial at Persepolis.

Interlude. . .Parthian Dynasty

(B.C. 331 - A.D. 226)

Between the death of Alexander the Great (B.C. 13 June 323) and the overthrow of the Arshkanian or Parthian Emperor, Artabanus IV (Ardavan) by Artaxerxes I (Ardeshir Papakan) the former of the Sassanian Dynasty (A.D. 26 September 226) was an intervening period of five centuries.

There were in the neighbourhood of Bactria a number of desert nomad tribes, who used to make inroads into the Bactrian territories with the object of plundering. One of these nomadic tribes was that of the Parnian Dahae who had migrated from Scythia, and had their pasturing grounds on Bactrian territory. Diodotus, the powerful satrap of Bactria, attempted to bring these predatory people under his rule, and to escape him, they moved westward and settled within the boundaries of the Seleucid territory near Parthia. These Parnians came to be known as Parthians. The early Parthians did not bury their dead, but followed as far as possible the injunctions concerning the dead preserved by later Zoroastrianism. They exposed the corpses to be devoured by birds and beasts of prey, after which their bones were collected and placed in a sepulchre called Astodans.

Under the Achaemenids, they were subjected for several centuries to the religion followed by Cyrus and Darius, but their national faith inclined rather towards the worship of the elements and especially towards that of the sun and the moon, the latter they worshipped under the name of Anaitis, Artemus and Nannee. It was also influenced by the Pantheistic religion of the Scythes, and the Polytheism of the Hellenes. The cult of Mithra was widespread among the Parthians, and when they came in touch with the west, they erected temples and set up in them the statues and icons of their deities. In refinement and quickness of intelligence they were inferior to the Persians. Their language and writing were called by the later Persians, Pahlavi, that is the language of the Pehlivan (warriors or Parthians).

They were a nation above all of riders and from their childhood they acquired the art of riding bareback. Driving in chariots and a disinclination for hunting were considered effeminate. They passed almost all their time on horseback, conversing, buying, selling and even eating on horseback.

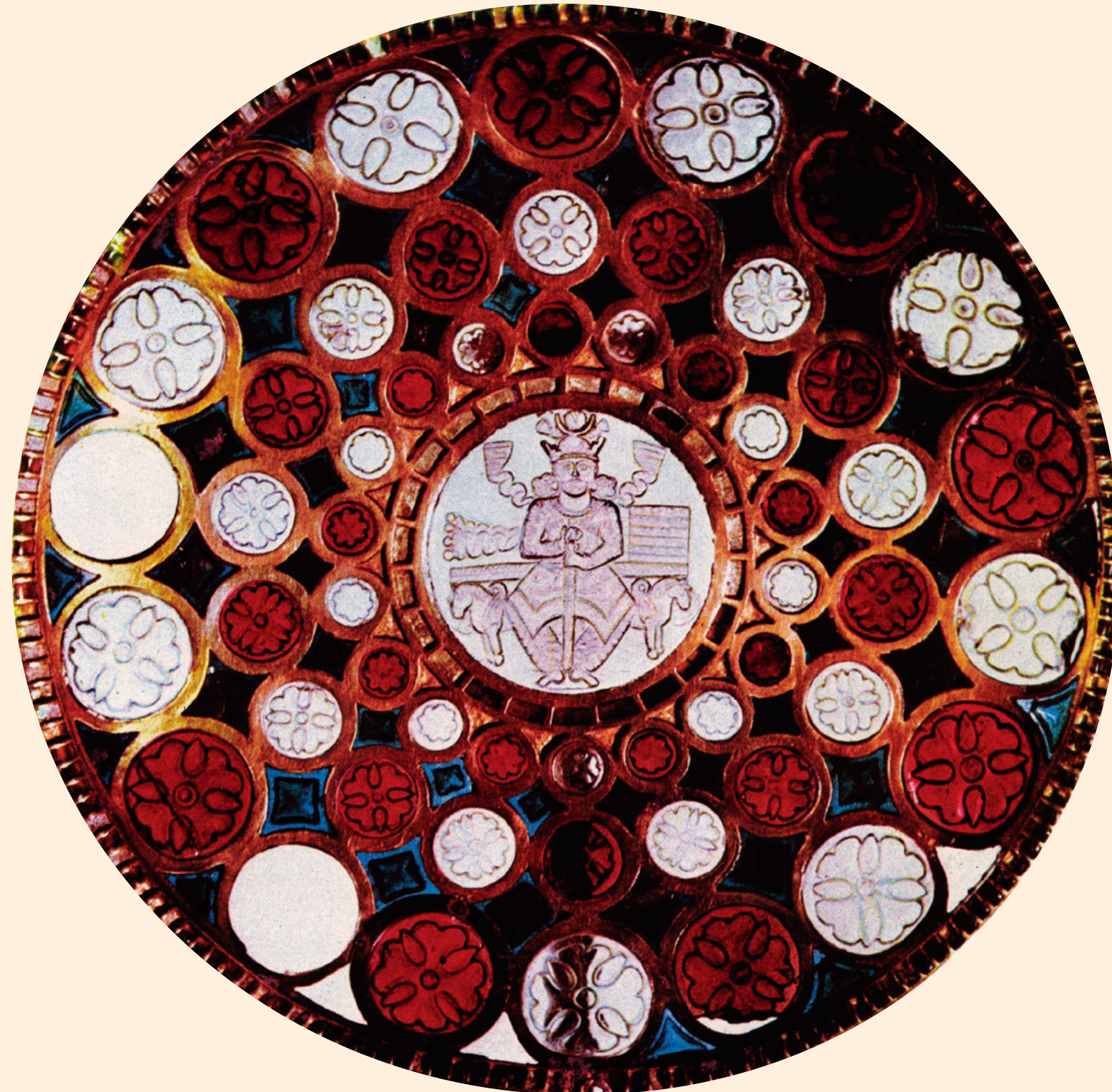
Their cavalry was of two classes: firstly, a body lightly armed with a bow of great strength and a quiver of arrows, and probably also a sword and a knife; secondly a body of heavy cavalry with horses clad for riding in armour and equipped with a long and heavy spear, more powerful and heavier than the pilum of the Romans, and also a short sword which was used in close combat. As to the foundation of the dynasty, it is said that the Parnians or Parthians, who settled themselves within the boundaries of the Seleucid territory, near Parthia, had two chiefs, the brothers Arsaces and Tiridates. When Andragoras, the Macedonian Governor of Parthia, wantonly insulted Tiridates, the two brothers took up arms and unfurled the ancient Persian battle standard of Kava, which their uncle had saved from falling into the hands of the Macedonians at the battle of Arbella, and had secretly preserved. They attacked Andragoras, slew him and permanently freed this part of the country from Macedonian rule.

The elder brother Arsaces was proclaimed king and in B.C. 250, the Eleventh Year of Anthiocus Theos, the foundation of the renowned Arshkanian or Parthian Empire was laid. Parthia proper was founded by the countries of Chorasmia, Margiana, Sarangia, Sagathia and Hyrcania. In area it was about 33,000 square miles. In the third year of his reign, Arsaces was killed in battle by a spear thrust, and was succeeded by Tiridates who, on accession, adopted the name of his brother Arsaces. The same name came to be adopted in addition to his own by each succeeding Parthian sovereign, and so the dynasty is also known as the Arsacid or Arshkanian Dynasty.

From the foundation of the Arshkanian or Parthian Dynasty there began a long series of fights between the Romans and the Parthians, and this went on for more than 300 years, during which many rulers both in Rome and in Parthia came to power. It is not the purpose of this book to deal with the details of the battles between the Romans and the Parthians. The curious can refer to Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Suffice it to say that powerful generals like Pompey and Mark Anthony, as also Caesar, could not subdue this proud and warlike race, which in the long run was instrumental in repeatedly defeating the mighty Roman Empire.

Crude as the Parthians were, there are scores of instances of barbarity and infidelity shown by the Romans also towards the Parthians time and again, which have besmirched the proud name of the Romans in history. Nevertheless, the Parthians' loss of reverence for the Magians, their leaning towards idolatry and their other notorious defections from the pure tenets of Zoroastrianism gave great offence to the other Iranis who were staunch adherents of the old faith. And this was not the least among the causes that culminated in the revolt against Parthian domination under the leadership of their national Prince, Ardeshir Papakan (Artaxerxes I) who founded the great Sassanian Empire on the ashes of the Parthian.

PERSIAN HISTORY
SASSANIAN DYNASTY
A PERIOD OF YAZATA YASNA



Defeat & Dispersal

The House of Sasan

Ardeshir Papakan

According to tradition, Sasan, the ancestor of the Sassanian kings, was a high dignitary in the temple of Anahita at Stakhr in Persis (Parsa). His son, Papak, who succeeded him in this office, married the daughter of a local prince, from whom he seized power by a coup d'état. He was believed, by later tradition, to be the real founder of the dynasty, and his accession in A.D. 208 was the starting point of a new era. His suzerain, the Parthian King Ardavan, refused to recognise the legality of his action and withheld his consent when Papak wished to secure the succession for his elder son, who died in an accident. His younger son, Ardeshir Papakan, proclaimed himself King of Persis. Ardeshir quickly reduced to submission all the small kingdoms in the province, succeeded in uniting them under his rule, and extended his suzerainty beyond its borders to Isfahan and Kerman. His sudden rise to power worried the Parthian king who ordered the King of Ahwaz to march against him. This king was defeated and shortly afterwards Ardeshir routed the army of the Parthian king in three successive battles, in the last of which at Susiana in A.D. 224, the latter was killed. The way to Ctesiphon lay open and two years later, Ardeshir was crowned King of Iran. Five centuries after the fall of the Achaemenians, the Persian people had regained power, and the new dynasty, as the legitimate successor of the Achaemenians, ensured the continuity of Iranian civilisation.

When Ardeshir succeeded in consolidating the various states of Iran into one mighty commonwealth under his sceptre, he proceeded vigorously thereupon to establish a form of government in conformity with the teachings of Zarathushtra which would unite his empire as Church and State. But unfortunately, when he came to power after the Parthians, the Zoroastrian religion had been reduced to a sort of pagan

Zoroastrianism which smothered the true message of the Prophet. It was Zoroastrian in name but Ahurian in form — with a difference however. Instead of many Gods, there were now Yazatas of the same name. In spite of this, it was through Ardeshir that the Zoroastrian faith became once more enthroned as the creed paramount, after a lapse of full five centuries and remained so for four centuries under the House of Sasan. The King himself, being of priestly caste, strongly upheld the doctrine of the unity of the Church and the State. The two, he said, are like brother and sister; neither can flourish without the other. They both are interwoven together like two pieces of brocade. The *Dinkard*, which is the greatest of the Pahlavi works of this period, upholds the divine right of kings and states that if the temporal power of the glorious King Jamshid had been blended with the spiritual power of the supreme priest Zarathushtra, the evil spirit would have lain low ere this, and the kingdom of righteousness would have been established on earth once and forever.

Ardeshir, as a Pontiff-King himself, commissioned his High-Priest Tansar to collect the scattered Avestan works and to prepare an authorised compilation of the sacred texts. The enthusiasm evoked among the faithful at the restoration of their lost scriptures presents a situation seldom paralleled in history, and certainly never surpassed in the religious development of Zoroastrianism. Ardeshir was now in search of an orthodoxy and revived for the Great God Ahuramazda the title of Supreme Creator and Conserver of all that is good. . . But while doing all this, one major issue was forgotten and lost sight of and this was the transcendent majesty of God which was central in Zarathushtra's thoughts.

Ardeshir faced many enemies before he could re-establish the frontiers of the former empire. A powerful coalition was formed against him by the King of Armenia, the Scythians and the King of Kushans which the Romans seemed to support. He fought this formidable coalition in a series of battles, and partly by diplomacy and partly by valour, he defeated all the partners of the coalition. This victory made him master of an empire extending from the Euphrates to Merv, Herat and Seistan. Having won at home, he started the consolidation of his frontiers. Conflict with Rome became inevitable. It ended with the Iranians regaining two important fortresses—Nisbis and Carrhae (Haran). The wars continued during Ardeshir's reign of nearly fifteen years. He overcame one enemy after another and succeeded in building up a new Iranian empire. His greatest achievement was to forge the army into a powerful instrument that made possible the realisation of his policy. He trained his son Shapur to rule and according to tradition, handed over the crown to him and retired from active life a few years before his death.

Shapur inherited from his father an empire which still had to be consolidated. In the context of the age, this meant more wars. He fought against the Kushans in the East and Rome in the West. He has left a

long inscription on the walls of the Fire Temple at Naksh-i-Rustam recording his success: his victorious armies captured Peshawar, the winter capital of the Kushan King, occupied the Indus valley, and pushing North across the Hindu Kush, conquered Bactria, crossed over the Oxus, and entered Samarkand and Tashkent. The Kushan dynasty founded by the great Kaniksha fell and was replaced by the princes who acknowledged Iranian overlordship. As an heir of the Achaemenians, and to fulfil the ambitions of his father who warred with Rome to retrieve the eastern provinces of the Iranian empire, lost to Alexander the Great. Shapur besieged the western power. He scored three brilliant victories over the Roman armies. Three times, Antioch, the oriental capital of the Roman empire, fell into the hands of the Iranians.

This struggle climaxed with the battle of Edessa in which the Emperor Valerian with 70,000 of his legionaries, was taken prisoner by the victorious King of Kings. These legionaries were exiled to Iran and they furnished the empire with specialists, architects, engineers and technicians who were employed on large scale public works, notably the building of bridges, barrages and roads which brought great benefits for the rich province of Khuzistan. Some of their remains are still in use. To commemorate these victories, Shapur had five bas-reliefs sculpted on the rocks and cliffs of Pars, in one of which the Roman Emperor is shown prostrate at his feet. Shapur was not only a great military leader, he had wide ranging interests and a questioning mind. He commissioned the translation of numerous Greek and Indian works on subjects as varied as medicine, astronomy and philosophy. He took an interest in the heretic Mani and extended his protection to this founder of a 'universal' religion, whose ideas, borrowed from Zoroastrians, Buddhism and Christianity, gained adherents in western Asia from among the followers of these great religions. Shapur died in A.D. 272.

Shapur II The real successor of the two founders of the Sassanian empire and civilisation was Shapur II. He was a minor when he became the King, on the death of Ormazd II. His long reign of 70 years A.D. 309-379 proved worthy of those of the first two princes of the line. During his youth, the Kushans had made inroads into Sassanian territory and the first operation which the adult Shapur undertook was to push back the invaders. In this he was following in the footsteps of Shapur I who had yoked the Kushans under Sassanian hegemony. Shapur II demolished the Kushan Empire and annexed its territory to Iran, to be governed by kings chosen from among the Sassanian princes who resided at Bactria. It was here that the kingdom of the Ephthalites was founded later. It took advantage of Iranian weakness towards the beginning of the fifth century and expanded on both sides of the

Hindu Kush, threatening Iran as well as India. Cultural expansion followed on political success, and Sassanian art spread to the east. It reached the distant towns of Chinese Turkistan and even penetrated into China.

Shapur II inherited the disgrace of the two agreements concluded with the Romans by Behram and Narsah his predecessors which had led to the loss of the greater part of the western provinces of the empire. Having removed the threat to his security in the East, Shapur resumed the war in the West, to wipe out this disgrace. These operations proved protracted. At one stage the Romans tried to negotiate a settlement, but this was rejected since, unlike the Parthians, the Sassanians were not willing to be always on the defensive. The most brilliant feat of arms on this campaign was the capture of Amida by the Sassanian army. The Romans counter-attacked and threatened Ctesiphon. It was at this stage that the Roman Emperor Julian was killed in battle and the Roman army withdrew. The subsequent peace restored the disputed provinces to Shapur II. Armenia too was recovered. However, the Romans continued to intrigue to place a Roman prince in power in Armenia and compelled Shapur II to reduce it to an Iranian province and governed by a marzban or commander of the frontier marches.

As regards religion, the great work inaugurated by the founder of the royal House of Sasan was zealously continued by his descendants and notably by Shapur II, who brought the work to completion with the help of his illustrious Dastur and premier, Adarbad Maraspend. Mani's heresy was at its height during this period, and Adarbad strove hard to restore the faith of his people that was undermined by Mani's heretical teachings. In order to prove the marvels of the faith, Adarbad is reported to have submitted himself to the ordeal of the molten metal and to have come out unscathed. King Shapur thereupon declared the work, as thus redacted, to be authoritative and he commanded that anything outside this canonical collection should not be countenanced. Another source states that still further steps were taken to put the truth of the religion to the test. Several pious mobeds were convoked to attend at the temple of the fire Froba and there to consider the momentous question of deputing one of their number to visit in a vision the spiritual world and thus to bring back from the angels themselves a first-hand knowledge of matters spiritual for the complete restoration of the religion.

Seven holy men were first elected from the assembly. Out of this number Arda Viraf was selected as the most righteous and saintly. After preliminary ceremonies this holy man entered into a trance for seven days and nights during which he was transported in spirit to the other world. His soul ascended into the realm of heaven, traversed the spiritual regions, and after beholding paradise visited likewise the inferno. Viraf described the experience of his visions and thus contributed to rehabilitating the faith of the people in their historic religion. Though the canon was declared by the edict of Shapur II the work of rendering

the Avestan texts into Pahlavi with explanatory commentaries, and the composition of original works in the court language, continued throughout the Sassanian period, and even long after the downfall of the empire.

Zarathushtra is a historical personage in the *Gathas*. In the later *Avesta* he is surrounded by an aureole, and becomes superhuman. But in the Pahlavi works his personality is enshrouded by miracles, and he is transformed into a myth. The fascination for marvels in religion is an unmistakable sign of the times. Christian bishops carried on inveterate disputes with the Zoroastrian clergy in Iran, based the claim of the greatness of their own religion on miracles. Perhaps in consequence the life-story of Zarathushtra, as told by the writers of the Pahlavi period, is similarly stamped with the mark of the miraculous.

The long encounter between Iran and Rome soon assumed a new aspect. The Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, and Armenia were both converted to Christianity, and this led to closer ties between Armenia and Byzantium. Armenia, which had long been the cockpit of the Irano-Roman wars, was now torn between two factions of its population. The newly converted Christians were pro-Roman, and opposed to them was a powerful section of Armenian nobility which sought to maintain the old connection with Iran whose civilization had so profoundly influenced their country. When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire, the Christian subjects of the King of Kings inevitably became political suspects in the eyes of the Iranian authorities, and their repression was the inevitable outcome during the rest of the long reign of Shapur II. His death was followed by a half century of decline in royal power and the opposition of the nobility which had grown from the days of Ardeshir. This struggle continued until the emergence of Behram Gor, one of the famous Sassanian emperors.

Behram Gor Behram Gor A.D. 421-438 was forced to stem the expansionist designs of the Ephthalites. After successfully quelling them, he fought a short war with Byzantium. The main cause for this clash with Rome did not lie in any territorial disputes. The difference arose on the question of discrimination against the Christians in the Sassanian empire. There was a truce because Behram Gor did not believe in oppressing the Christians. The new entente between Rome and Iran led to freedom of worship for the Christians. The Christians of Iran, however, were not a united force. Their internecine quarrels were ultimately resolved by a synod which decided to make the Christian church of Iran independent of that of Byzantium. Thus the suspicion against the Christian Iranians who had in the past been accused of conspiracy with the Romans was brought to an end. As a consequence of the entente, a joint arrangement between the Romans and

the Sassanians was made for the defence of the northern areas against the persistent attacks of the nomadic tribes. Behram Gor, however, won fame as a hunter, poet and musician. Many legends were spun around his prowess and he was a favourite subject of Iranian artists for centuries, even after the fall of the empire. After the death of Behram Gor, another century of internal conflict and upheaval rocked the Sassanian empire.

Israel had come under the Iranian rule at a very early period. The Babylonian exile brought the Jews into close contact with the Persians in the sixth century B.C. We have already referred to the fact that the restoration of the temple at Jerusalem was executed at the royal command of the Iranian Kings, Cyrus and Darius. The Jews had settled in Iran in large numbers from very early times, and had established their colonies all over the country. They prospered peacefully and were accorded privileges to manage their own civic affairs without state interference. Some of the royalty had even married Jewish princesses. King Yazdegard I, for example, had a Jewish consort. But in general those who married Jewish women were disliked, and the *Dinkard* strongly disapproved the practice of contracting such unions. In course of time, the Iranians and the Israelites seemed to have been in disagreement in religious matters. Differences of opinion on questions of belief must have been frequent. All of the Pahlavi works strongly denounce Judaism. Such violent attacks on the beliefs of a race which had settled in Iran from the very early period of her history manifested the venom that flowed between Zoroastrians and Jews, in Sassanian times.

Likewise Christianity had entered Iran during the Parthian period, and the Sassanians found the creed of Christ more or less established when they set up their empire. Of all the alien faiths in Iran, Christianity was the most militant. Over-zealous attempts by the Christians to win converts to their faith from the ruling nation, and their reckless utterances, often caused human bloodshed. An enthusiastic bishop once delighted his congregation by predicting that the soul of the king would, in his future life, be born in hell-fire with Satan, whereas the Christians would be transported to heaven, while another patriarch urged the Roman bishops to free them from the accursed rule of the Persians. All this helped to aggravate the discord between the Zoroastrians and Christians and violent skirmishes ensued.

The priests on both the sides became zealots, and often descended into fanaticism. Great was the fury of religious rancour that prevailed on such occasions. The seceders from Zoroastrianism were persecuted; apostasy was made a capital crime by the Zoroastrian Church, and the renegades were put to death. Besides the fight being waged against the Jews and Christians, the Zoroastrian Church had lost all control over its adherents. Sect after sect arose, each claiming to interpret the religion of Zarathushtra in its own light. The most formidable of the sects, which counted eminent persons among its adherents during the

Sassanian period and which had a considerable following long after the disappearance of this last Zoroastrian empire, was that of the Zarvanites. To add to these problems came the third heresy of Mazdak (Mani's heresy in Shapur II reign being the first). The religious fabric of Iran at this moment defies all imagination.

Noshirwan-e-Adil The next great Sassanian king, Khushru I (Noshirwan the Just) came to the throne in A.D. 531 after a long struggle between the aristocracy and the other sections of the people. This emergence of the new monarch gave him an exceptional position. His authority was recognised by all the classes, including the priesthood. He spent the earlier years of his life in the re-establishment of a settled society and in wiping out the consequences of Mazdakite excesses perpetrated during the rule of Kavad. During this period he took urgent measures to save the countryside; villages were rebuilt, roads and bridges restored, neglected canals cleaned out and lost cattle replaced. His government introduced legislation that reformed the fiscal organisation of the empire. A survey was made of all land, taxes were fixed according to yield, situation and type of crop. The tax of the individual was based on the category and class of person.

All these reforms by the Crown introduced more equity in its demands, on which depended state revenues and the conduct of internal administration and foreign wars. Reforms were also introduced in the army. Four commanders were appointed for the four divisions of the empire in place of the single commander-in-chief. Peasant soldiers were created by the introduction of compulsory military service. Subject tribes were settled in the frontier districts in order to improve the defences of the empire. Strong fortifications were erected in the Derband pass to hold the road against nomadic invaders, and a wall, several miles long was built near the south-east corner of the Caspian Sea to protect the plain of Gurgan, the gap in the mountain armour of Iran.

Khushru, apart from being called a great conqueror and a brave king, earned the title of Adil and Dadgar; he was generally called Anushehrawan Dadgar or Adil. Dadgar stands for 'Listener of complaints' or 'Giver of Justice'. Adil means 'Just'. So he was looked upon as a just king or the king who listened to the complaints of his subjects, and redressed their grievances. From Anushehrawan the name changed into Anushirvan, and finally to Noshirwan, with the added titles of either Dadgar or Adil.

Noshirwan spent considerable time in war, and yet he was a devotee of learning, fond of collecting books and appreciative of the worth of scholars. He was himself well read in the works of Plato and Aristotle, which were translated into Pahlavi on his orders. He had indeed

seven Greek scholars in his court at Jund-i-Shahpur, the great intellectual centre of Noshirwan, where Nestorian Christians discoursed and exchanged the fruits of Greek culture, with Iranian and Indian scholars. He kept them in comfort for 20 years, and he often entered into philosophical discussions with them. Some of these were the Greek scholars whom the Emperor Justinian of Constantinople had driven away from the academies of Athens and Alexandria which were suppressed in 528 A.D.

Not only that but Noshirwan with his usual sense of justice and fair play, had allowed these philosophers to follow their own faith. It is said that Noshirwan was very particular about the officers of his household and of his army, as also of his political departments carrying out their duties honestly and faithfully. The punishment for any officer found guilty of bribery was to be sawed alive. Similarly, Noshirwan emphasised discipline in his army. On pay-day every soldier had to appear fully armed and give proof of his proficiency in his particular art which minimised all chances of deceit.

Though Noshirwan was officially considered the Commander-in-Chief, he placed himself on a level of equality with the rank and file. Once on pay-day, when all the soldiers and military officers had gathered together, Noshirwan absented himself. The paymaster of the army, Babak by name, twice dispersed the soldiers without payment and declared that salaries could not be disbursed till the Commander-in-Chief had put in his appearance. When Noshirwan heard of this and when the army had assembled for the third time to be paid, he galloped upon his horse amidst cheers from his men, to receive his pay. To everybody's surprise the paymaster turned Noshirwan away without paying him because he did not have two spare strings for his bow according to the rules then in force. Like a true soldier, Noshirwan galloped back and returned fully equipped with uniform and extra strings, as required by the then prevailing army code, and got his pay like every other soldier. Far from being annoyed with the paymaster, he complimented him on his strict discipline and promoted him to a higher rank.

Such was Noshirwan, a just, wise, vigilant and martial, yet merciful monarch, under whom Iran rose to great heights, expanded its frontiers, and enjoyed abundant prosperity. Hazrat Muhammad, the Prophet, spoke with pride of being born during the regime of King Noshirwan. In fact, it is stated in the Hadis, "The Prophet, on whom be peace, sayeth, 'I was born in the reign of King Noshirwan, the Just'". So mighty revered was Noshirwan in the Muslim world that even today when travelling through Afghanistan and Baluchistan if an Afghan or a Baluchee were to meet a Parsa i.e. a native of Persis and asked him who he was, the answer would be: "I am of the lineage of Noshirwan-e-Adil." Great would be the joy of the listener who would embrace him and respect him as a descendant of a great and just King of a renowned race.

Nine years after he came to the throne Noshirwan began his military campaigns in the West with the invasion of Syria in A.D. 540. Antioch was captured and burned, and its inhabitants transplanted to a new town built on the same plan near Ctesiphon. Byzantium was willing to conclude peace. In return for increased tribute, Noshirwan was willing to leave the western frontier unchanged. The war in the East was renewed twenty years later when, in alliance with the western Turks, Noshirwan smashed the renewed Ephthalite power: its possessions were partitioned between the allies, and the eastern frontier of Iran was re-established on the Oxus.

In the North, he successfully resisted attacks by the Huns, and annexed Yemen in the South. This territorial expansion of Iran resulting from its growing strength and military success raised in Byzantium the fear of a new conflict with its old adversary. Rome, therefore, engaged its energies in large-scale diplomatic activity with the object of forming an anti-Iranian coalition that would virtually encircle the enemy. This attempt, however, proved abortive; disturbances in Armenia provided further proof of Iranian military superiority; Mesopotamia was invaded and devastated by the forces of the King of Kings. While peace negotiations were taking place, the old king died, after a reign of nearly half a century.

He was idealised by oriental tradition as a defender of the people, a lover of justice and a stern, yet benevolent ruler. His reign may be considered as the most brilliant period of the Sassanian age, both for its military and diplomatic triumphs and for the achievements of Iranian civilisation in art, science and literature.

Parviz the victorious

The last great king of the Sassanians was Khushru II (Parviz, the Victorious A.D. 590-628) the grandson of Noshirwan. He came to the throne in difficult times. His father, Ormuzd IV's regime was rocked by a military coup led by Vahram Chobin, one of the outstanding military figures of the day. Vahram Chobin with the support of the nobles had ousted Ormuzd IV and thereafter, with the support of the army had seized the capital and declared himself king — a crime of lese-majesty, since he was not a member of the royal family. Khushru II was powerless in the face of this coup d'etat and was compelled to take asylum in Byzantium ruled by the Emperor Maurice, from whom he obtained troops. However, Byzantium extorted a heavy price for this assistance and Iran lost practically all Armenia, and the Greek frontier was extended to Lake Van and Tiflis.

Khushru II waited for some years to recoup his forces. The assassination of the Emperor Maurice afforded the opportunities to attack Byzantium. The Iranian army regained Armenia, South Edessa, marched across Cappadocia to Caesarea, and reached the Bosphorus near Scutari (A.D. 610). The following year it captured Antioch, Damascus, and finally Jerusalem. It was in A.D. 614 that Khushru marched on to Jerusalem, captured it and carried away the relic of the Holy Cross on which Jesus Christ was said to have been crucified, quite in contrast with the tolerance practised by the Achaemenian kings. This act of Khushru enflamed the entire Christian world and it united under the Roman Emperor Heraclius to rescue Europe from Iran's attempt to dominate it for the second time in history. Heraclius invaded Iran and carried back the Cross to Jerusalem on 14th September 629 A.D. a date celebrated every year by the Christians as the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Heraclius then negotiated peace terms with Khushru, which included Syria, Asia Minor and Egypt as indemnity. Naturally Khushru refused these terms. With repeated losses in wars and territories, Khushru became demented and gave vent to his vexation by acts of cruelty. He threw into prison several of the officers who had been defeated by Heraclius and put many to death. He went to the extent of imprisoning some of his own sons. But what displeased Khushru's nobles was his declared intention of appointing as successor Mardasas (Mardan Shah of Firdausi), the son of his favourite Christian wife, the beautiful Shirin of Shira, waving aside the legitimate claims of his eldest son Kobad.

This led 22 nobles, headed by Gaudanaspa, the Commandant of the troops at Ctesiphon, to conspire and set up Kobad. In a mock trial they held Khushru guilty of certain misdeeds. They went to the extent of killing several of his children in his presence and hurled insults at him. Finally, one Mehr Hormazd, an ugly and evil-looking man was dispatched to kill the king. Such was the tragic end of this brilliant King of Iran, Khushru Parviz, after a reign of 38 years.

It is said that under this King the imperial revenues, according to a statement prepared in A.D. 607, amounted to six hundred million drachmae (one hundred fifty million rupees). Khushru Parviz was in the habit of dividing the day into four sections; the first was devoted to state affairs, the second to pleasure, to music and friendly conversation with his grantees; the third to prayers; the first half of the fourth to observation of the sky and the philosophy, the other half to the drinking of wine in the company of beautiful women. Khushru Parviz was a lover of beauty and also a patron of the arts. No reigning prince had done more to stimulate the fine arts than he.

In the neighbourhood of Kermanshah, and not far from Taq-i-Rustam, was situated the famous quadrilateral platform where this king received

homage in royal assembly from the kings of China, Turan, India and Byzantine. Its length and breadth were a 100 cubits and it was constructed with dressed blocks of stone, skilfully matched and held closely together by iron clamps so that they looked like a single piece.

His palace at Canzaca was a domed building, the ceiling of which was embellished with representations of the sun, moon and stars, while below was an image of the monarch, seated and attended by messengers bearing wands of office. A machine was attached by which rain and thunder could be imitated. His palace at Artaima, referred to by Oriental writers as Dastagard was supported by 40,000 columns of silver, adorned by 30,000 rich hangings upon the walls and further ornamented by 1000 globes suspended from the roof.

The Mashita palace, in the land of Moab, situated about 30 miles due east of the head of the Dead Sea, was built between 614 and 627 A.D. It was one of Khushru's prized possessions. It consisted of two buildings, separated by a courtyard of nearly 200 feet, each of which was 180 feet along the front, with a depth respectively of 140 and 150 feet. The second building, which faces the south was carved externally with an ornateness and superbness unparalleled in the ruins of Sassanian times and perhaps scarcely excelled in the architecture of any age or nation.

Khushru Parviz had a throne called Takadis, supported on 4 feet of red rubies. At the tip of each foot there were 100 pearls, each of the size of a sparrow's egg. The story goes that when Khushru became King, he heard of existing records which showed that the Kianian King Vishtaspa had intended to construct a throne based on the design of his Minister Jamasp. Khushru obtained these records and constructed the Takadis. This throne was of ivory and teak, adorned with silver and gold, 180 cubits long, 130 cubits broad and 15 cubits high surmounted by a canopy of gold and lapis-lazuli on which were embroidered the sky, the stars and signs of the Zodiac and the seven climes (Kishwars), as well as the former kings in different stances either at banquet or in battle or hunting. A special mechanism indicated the hour of the day. The throne was covered with four carpets of brocade embroidered with gold and decked with pearls and rubies, each of these carpets symbolising one of the four seasons.

The sumptuous splendour Khushru Parviz favoured and his vanity and pretensions did not end here. He had a thousand and more elephants maintained for the use and the splendour of his court, besides 12,000 white camels, and 50,000 horses, asses and mules. In his harem were 3000 ladies; these were kept more or less for the purpose of adding to the ostentatious magnificence of a great court. He constantly kept in his palace 15,000 *Kanize Mootrabe* (female musicians) and 6000 *Khaje Sarra* (household officers). Whenever he rode forth, 200 persons attended him, scattering perfumes on every side while a thousand water carriers sprinkled the roads on which he was to pass.

The King's minstrel-Barbud

It is recorded in history that King Khushru Parviz had a minstrel by name Barbud, the like of whom Iran had not seen. It is said that he was prevented at first by jealous courtiers from being presented at the court. But he contrived on a moonlit night to hide himself in the trees, clad in green, and when King Khushru Parviz made his appearance in convivial company in the garden, he fascinated his audience by singing three songs in succession. He then showed himself and was appointed Chief Court Minstrel by the gratified monarch whom he regaled day in and day out with his specially composed songs.

It is said that Khushru Parviz had a famous black charger, named Shabdiz who was such a favourite of his master that the latter had announced that he who first brought the news of its death would be slain forthwith. When this favourite animal died Barbud on the entreaties of the courtiers, presented himself before the king and poured forth such a pathetic melody on the philosophy of death that the king's heart was touched. He guessed the end of Shabdiz but forebore to inflict any injury on him who had so skilfully broken the ominous news.

It is further narrated that when Khushru Parviz was imprisoned prior to his death by the rebels of his court, Barbud made his home outside the prison and night and day sang melodious songs to while away the time of that unfortunate monarch. And when the king was murdered, Barbud burnt his instruments and cut off his fingers, saying he would not sing any more nor play for anyone hereafter. Such was the love of that minstrel for his great master.

Shirin Farhad

Amongst many tales told about King Khushru Parviz and his glorious reign, there is one about a stone carver named Farhad who is supposed to have fallen in love with his beautiful Queen Shirin. To put an obstacle effectively but courteously out of the way, it is said that the king proposed to give up Shirin to Farhad, if he hollowed out a rock and made the waters of the neighbouring river flow into the adjoining river.

Undaunted, Farhad started the job with his chisel and hammer with an iron resolution, ceaselessly continuing his work day and night and making the wilderness resound with his desperate cries of 'Shirin, Shirin'. The king was afraid lest the mountain should be hollowed and therefore he contrived to despatch an old woman to Farhad to convey the false news of Shirin's death. Farhad heard the tragic news when at work on the mountain, hurled himself into the valley below, but immortalised his name in the romantic episodes of Iran.

The death of Khushru Parviz, who had waged the last war in the longstanding rivalry with the West, heralded the collapse of the Persian empire. The death-knell of the nation had been struck when with the advent of weak kings, the military commanders, who felt the army owed allegiance to them rather than to the person of the king, persuaded the forces to revolt. Rival princes strove to assert their respective rights to the throne. Court intrigues and strifes became rife. The long wars with the Romans in the far West and the eastern hordes near at home whose inroads were facilitated by the unfavourable geographical position of Iran, had exhausted national resources. Famine and plague had ravaged the whole country. Unbridled luxury with all its concomitant vices was imported from foreign lands, and the simplicity of life inculcated by Zarathushtra was abandoned. The masses did not escape the contagion of the luxury and vice of the nobility, and the love of simplicity was replaced by a feverish worship of pleasure. Simple habits fostered by agricultural pursuits were on the wane; and the entire social fabric of Iran was seriously dislocated. The wellsprings of patriotism were sapped, and the bravery with which the Iranians of old had faced their national foes was weakened.

The age of valour had given place to an age of weakness and decay. These causes aggravated the nation's decline and foreshadowed the coming catastrophe. There was no saviour in this the darkest period of the nation's agony, to avert the impending ruin. One can imagine the hopeless state of affairs at the time when eleven rulers (including two women) sat on the throne of Iran in the short span of four years. The twelfth and the last to sit on the tottering throne of the illustrious house of the Sasan was Yazdegard III. The nomads of the deserts of Arabia were for the first time knit into a nation by the new faith. Pulsating with the vigour and zeal of youth, and frenzied by the sudden turn in their fortunes, the host of Iran's formidable foes overran the country, in the first half of the seventh century, and the decisive battles of Qadisiya and Nihavand sealed her fate. The Arabs were victorious and Yazdegard fled to Merv. It was now A.D. 641. He was in hiding till A.D. 651, when he was discovered by his generals and assassinated. With his death the Sassanian dynasty came to an end. The Arab victory was now complete.

Defeat and dispersal

Yes, the Arab victory was complete. As Dastur Dhalla states in his book *Zoroastrian Theology* "The Crescent superseded the Kava banner, Shahinshah was followed by the Caliph, Ormuzd was replaced by Allah. Zarathushtra gave place to Muhammad, the Koran supplanted the Avesta and the shrill cry of the Muazzin from the minarets of the mosque drowned the intonations of the Mobed at the Fire-Temple. The Iranian nation now broke into pieces for the only thing that could have helped them keep together, the spirit of the religion of Mazda was lost a long while ago.

"It was through the Zoroastrian Church that the religious teachings filtered into the populace of Iran. During the period of her great influence when the State was practically under her tutelage, the Church rendered a lasting service by her attempts to reinvigorate the Mazdyasnian faith. She triumphed when she stood for the spirit of the religion of Mazda; but she failed when she descended to rigid formalism, stifled independent inquiry, stigmatised honest doubt as Ahrimanian, and sought to overrule original thinking by dogmatic assertions. A few thousand years only separated Zarathushtra from the Sassanian period but a thick veil had already begun to hide the pristine truth of his great religion from his followers. Religion defeats its own ends when it degenerates into dogmatic theology. And it was not otherwise in Sassanian Iran."

There can be no doubt that the Arabs converted many to the Islamic faith at the point of the sword and many more must have perished by resisting. Those who wished to follow their ancient religion as taught by Zarathushtra did flee into the mountains of Kohistan in Khorasan where they led a miserable existence for a century or so. However, there came a time in A.D. 749 when the Umayyad Arabs lost their power and the Abbasid Caliphs, the true Iranis, began to rule Iran again. Yet, there was no surge back to the Zoroastrian faith. No doubt composition of the Pahlavi treatises was taken up again and much of the Pahlavi literature has come down from the 9th century and 11th century, but the fervour for the Zoroastrian faith was gone.

According to tradition, the faithful who hid in the mountains suffered great hardship and persecution for about a hundred years. Then they made their way to the port of Hormuz and eked out an existence there for another 15 years. From there they set sail for the coast of Kathiawar. Here again they spent another 19 years before they set sail and arrived in the village of Sanjan. Some say in A.D. 716, some say in A.D. 785. On the way there was a great storm and it seemed all would be lost. They prayed to their great God and finally they landed safely. As a thanksgiving, within a few years of their landing, an Atash Behram was set up in Sanjan by them.

Reflections With the departure from the shores of Iran of those who wished to keep their Zoroastrian faith, a great episode in the religions of the world came to a close. A great religion, one of the most ancient and once a state religion of an empire was forced to leave its motherland and look to alien shores for sanctuary. In the past, kingdoms and empires had fallen, but this great religion had gone on for 3500 years or more unimpaired by their fall.

Around B.C. 3000 in the times of the Kianian dynasty, Spitama Zarathushtra, the Prophet of the Great God Ahuramazda had proclaimed the religion of Mazda and the people received Him with great enthusiasm. The religion spread across the length and breadth of Iran making many hundreds of thousands Zoroastrians. After the Kianian dynasty, this religion lived on amongst Iranian tribes and came once again into the limelight with the rise to power of the Achaemenians. The Behistan and other inscriptions are testimony to the fact that the religion was received fervently and was strong in the hearts of the people and this time millions accepted the Zoroastrian faith. Further, there is evidence that the Zoroastrian religion strongly influenced no less than three others—the early development of both, Judaism and its offshoot Christianity, as also Islam. The Achaemenian dynasty lasted over 200 years till it was destroyed by Alexander along with the holy Zoroastrian scriptures.

In spite of Alexander's evil design and the 500 years of religious barrenness that followed due to the Greek and Parthian rule of Iran, this great religion once again emerged with the rise of the Sassanians in A.D. 226. The religious fervour in its revival was amazing. King and populace moved to fan the smouldering fires in the hearts of the faithful and gave the religion a place of honour in their country and many more millions now made up the faithful. Great was the ardour of the Irani kings and greater still the zeal of their high priests, who set about to put together the Zoroastrian religion from scraps of parchment collected from all over the country.

From the time of Ardeshir Papakan, the first of the Sassanians until Shapur II, the religious renaissance went on and by about A.D. 335-350, the Sassanian exposition of the Zoroastrian religion was proclaimed by Shapur as complete and final. In spite of this, compilation of the scripture continued and the religion became more and more orthodox. In the 400 years of their rule, many great kings and pious men appeared on the scene and many original thoughts on the religion were born. But on the other hand orthodoxy mounted tighter controls, rituals and ceremonies multiplied with amazing speed. Many of Spitama Zarathushtra's finest concepts became clouded and corrupted, till a time came when there was only formalism and a mass of rituals and all things Gathic, which were abstract and spiritual, became concrete and material.

Evidently, discontentment filled the people as sect after sect grew, each claiming to interpret the religion in its own light, some descending to heresies like the Zarvanites, Manichaeism and Mazdakites, others to mysticism. Some brought back Gods from pre-Zoroastrian times and religions like Mithraism which had been reformed; and a string of Yazatas ruled the minds of the multitude. To all intents and purposes, a form

of Yazata Yasna was now practised by the Zoroastrians. The net result was the weakening of the Zoroastrian religion and confusion in the minds of the people. When the Arabs appeared and defeated the Sassanians, the Zoroastrian religion collapsed along with the state. Even when the Arab influence diminished and the Iranis came to power again there was no resurgence of the Zoroastrian faith.

Undoubtedly with the Muslims in power there must have been repression of the faith, but most great religions of the world have undergone terrible persecution and repression sometime or the other during the course of their history and most have emerged the stronger for it. So this provides no answer for the collapse. It could, however, mean that the people were confused, dissatisfied or even disillusioned with their religion as they understood it then and so remained passive. Even before the fall of the Sassanians, we hear of a Persian, a devout Zoroastrian named Salman, who in his intellectual dissatisfaction turned to the Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad and would converse with him about God. It is said that Muhammad found great satisfaction in Salman's philosophy and though it is not recorded anywhere, many of the ideas later expressed by this fiery Prophet resulted from these discussions. Probably he saw in the eyes of Salman the fire that was Mazda's and through his mouth heard the inspired words of Spitama Zarathushtra.

Muhammad was delighted when Salman embraced the religion of Islam for he was the first Iranian to do so and eventually became a Muslim saint. The Nusariyan sect included him in the trinity with Hazrat Muhammad and Hazrat Ali. When Salman closed his eyes and preached the Haqiqat and Marifat, he was expounding from the Mazda Yasna that lay deep-rooted in his heart and making explicit what was implicit in the *Quran*.

Yet again, after the Sassanians, Moulana Jalal-ud-din Rumi, the father of Sufism, in his mystic poems called the *Masnavi* propounded the essence of Sufism. It so delighted the Islamic world that the poems were called "Quran in the Pahlavi". Here again was, what seemed to be a Zoroastrian in the garb of a Muslim, reciting what was no more than the "lore of the Chishti" come down from the *Gathas*. Not being able to contain his secret, Rumi shared it with the world by his revealing couplet.

*"It is better that the Secrets of the Beloved
are expressed in terms other than theirs."*

Yet, on another instance knowing the religious background of the Jew and the Muslim, the Zoroastrian in Rumi has said:

*"The difference among men results from the outward name;
When you reach the inner meaning you reach peace.
Oh marrow of existence ! It is because
of the perspective in question
That there is difference between a Muslim,
a Zoroastrian and a Jew."*

These expressions of longing for one's God may have held out to Rumi a hope that he was keeping the tenets of his God alive within his poem, but it kindled no fires nor brought comfort to the hearts of Zoroastrians in Iran at that time. It showed instead the distress and the emptiness of the hearts of the Iranians and their unconscious longing and search for Mazda.

HAVEN OF SANJAN
THE AWAKENING
THE MAKING OF A ZARATHOSTI

ONE OF THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE,
IS TO LEARN TO RECEIVE
LESS OR MORE
WITH GRACE AND IN SINCERE GRATITUDE

(the Forgotten Graces)

Haven of Sanjan

(First 1000 years)

And so the Parsas of Persis came to Sanjan. This motley crowd of hungry, harassed and hunted men and women who had suffered untold miseries and deprivations landed at this village in leaky, battered boats. Of the millions of Zoroastrians in Iran, these few thousands (besides a few more left behind) were the only ones left who were prepared to lose their all, even their lives rather than give up their great God Ahuramazda. Keeping in view the state of affairs in Iran, their religious knowledge may not have been great, but their fervour had no limits. These were the last of the staunch Zoroastrians.

In Iran, it seemed as if Mazda had left its shores a long while ago. But here, on this alien land, even before this little band had landed, their God seemed to be hovering over them and waved aside a raging storm to guide them to the passive waters of Sanjan and a benign ruler. The Raja of Sanjan was one Jadi Rana and when the fugitives from Iran approached him for permission to settle on his land, he imposed five conditions on the Parsis, as they were by then called. These were:

1. A description of the Zoroastrian religion to the Raja by the Parsi Priest who had accompanied the refugees from Iran to India;
2. The adoption of Gujarati as their mother tongue;
3. The adoption of the sari by Parsi women;
4. That Parsi wedding processions be held in the dark.
5. The surrender of all weapons;

It is said that the leader of the band, their priest, first accepted all the conditions, then gave the Raja an idea of their religion in sixteen Sanskrit shlokas. Piloo Nanavutty in her book, "The Parsis" describes the meeting as below:

"A far more vivid account of the meeting between the Persian refugees and Jadhav Rana, than that in the Kissa is given in the Gujarati Garbas, group songs and dances, composed by the Parsis and sung by Parsi women on such occasions as Navjotes and weddings. I give the story in prose which was once sung in verse. Jadhav Rana issued a proclamation inviting all citizens to assemble in an open maidan (meadow). On a throne covered with rich drapes, the Raja took his seat. He was dressed in royal robes, wore a magnificent turban, and embroidered velvet slippers. Ranged round him were his mounted bodyguards, dressed in white, holding glittering spears.

"At a signal from Jadhav Rana, the Persian refugees were brought into the centre of the assembly. Their frail, old priest, holding a small *Afarghan* with the sacred fire, was the spokesman for the group, through an interpreter.

"What is it you want from us, O strangers from a far land?" asked Jadhav Rana.

"Freedom of worship, Sire," replied the old priest.

"Granted. What else do you wish?"

"Freedom to bring up our young in our own traditions and customs."

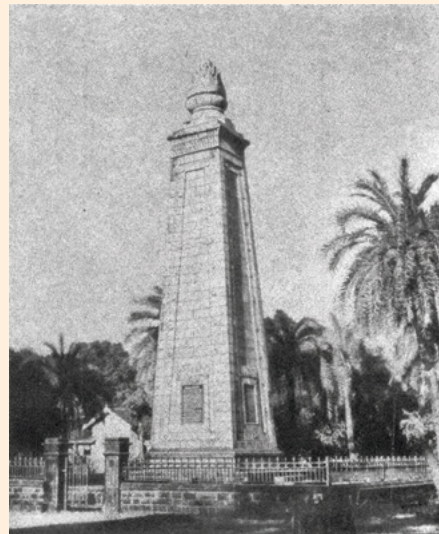
"Granted. What else do you wish?"

"A small piece of land that we could cultivate, so that we may not be a burden to the people among whom we live."

"Granted. In return, what will you do for the country of your adoption?"

The old priest asked for a bowl to be filled with milk and brought to the assembly. This was done. He then stirred a measure of sugar in the bowl and holding it up in his trembling hands, asked:

"Does any man see the sugar in this bowl of milk?" All shook their heads.



Sanjan Pillar
Commemorating the landing



"Sirs" said the Priest "We shall try to be like this insignificant amount of sugar in the milk of your human kindness."

“There were murmurs of approval from the crowd. Then, at a signal from the priest, all the refugees—men, women and children—prostrated themselves on the ground. Each picked up a handful of earth, and with tears streaming down their faces, they pressed it to their eyes and forehead. Then, after washing their hands and faces, the refugees turned their faces to the sun and recited the Kusti prayers, and performed the Kusti ritual,” and since that day this minuscule community has never asked for any special minority privileges or protection of the Raj (Government) to this day.

Then followed years of hard work and everyone betook himself to his profession and the Parsi settlement soon prospered. Within five years their condition improved and they did not forget their vow to their God to set up a fire temple at the first possible moment. The Raja’s permission was sought. It was cordially accorded along with the supply of various metals for the work. The Fire Temple, however, was wholly and exclusively constructed by the Parsis and was called an Atash Behram.

In this way just under a 1000 years went by. A few massacres of Parsi settlements did take place in the 10th and 11th centuries at Cambay and Variav. The third and last such attempt in 1425, however ended happily. The Portuguese Governor of the town of Thana demanded forcible conversion of all Parsis to Roman Catholicism and threatened to put to the sword all men, women and children, if they did not submit. The Parsis agreed and asked for four days so that they could celebrate their sacred rites for the last time. The great feast was held and the entire town with all the dignitaries were invited. Wine flowed like water and while the guests were indulging themselves, the Parsi men, women and children together with their sacred fire, left the town to the sound of music and in the midst of dancing. They did not stop till they reached Kalyan, south of Thana and for 300 years, they did not return to this town.

In 1484, the town of Sanjan was sacked by the Muslim General Alaf Khan. It is noteworthy to mention here that 1400 Parsis, the flower of the settlement in this town laid down their lives, defending Sanjan and fighting alongside the descendant of the Raja, who had so kindly permitted the Parsis’ sanctuary in his kingdom. His descendant, the Hindu prince and the leader of the Parsis, Ardeshir, were both killed. In the dark of night, the Sacred Fire was secretly shifted into the hills of Bahrot and concealed in a cave there for almost 12 years. From Bahrot, the Parsis went with the Sacred Fire to Bansda (50 miles northeast of Navsari) which was as prosperous as Sanjan. But since it was out of the way, the fire was removed to Navsari after 14 years in 1516 at the instance of Changashah, a pious and benevolent layman whose good qualities had made him famous both in Gujarat and in Iran. The Sacred Fire remained in Navsari till 1741, when it was removed to Balsar and after a year it was taken to Udvada where it burns till today, thus making it one of the holiest temples of the Parsis today. From 1733 to 1736 the fire was in Surat, but had to be brought back

to Navsari on account of the Pindari menace at the former place. As the Sacred Fire moved from place to place, a new fire temple would be constructed in its wake.

As the Parsi population grew and spread to different towns in Gujarat, the need to form ecclesiastical divisions was felt and in 1290 five such *panthaks* (divisions) were formed. They were established at Sanjan, Navsari, Godavreh, Broach and Cambay. The Parsis had very few religious texts with them and their questions were mainly on matters of ritual and ceremony. In 1178, an enterprising priest named Ervad Mahyar journeyed to Siestan and returned a decade later from Iran with a manuscript copy of the *Vendidad* in Pahlavi. The position did not improve and in the 15th century, a questionnaire was made up and a Parsi named Nariman Hoshang from Broach took the list to Iran via Afghanistan. He arrived at Yezd and placed his questions before the Iranian Dasturs. Meanwhile, Nariman Hoshang spent a year learning Pahlavi and maintained himself with great difficulty, selling dates in the market place. Finally, he was able to converse with the Dasturs of Yezd and 12 years later brought back to India answers to his queries around 1478. Thus, began the Revayets with the questions and answers flowing from the Zoroastrians of India to the Dasturs of Iran and this went on for 300 years.

No doubt, in 1200 A.D. a Parsi priest Neryosangh Dhaval seemed to have adopted Sanskrit, the language of the erudite of the land. He had translated the Avesta into Sanskrit but it gives no indication of the religious thought of the time, as no original thought is expressed therein. On the other hand, the Revayets showed that the people seemed more preoccupied with the formal rather than the spiritual. Their questions pertained to ritual observances, ceremonial ablutions, purificatory rites, forms of worship, rules of adoption and marriage, and other miscellaneous subjects. Their collection of traditions, customs and rites in the form of questions and answers were composed in Persian, which became the literary language of the Parsi scholars under the influence of the Muslim rule in Gujarat.

The *Bundahishn* and *Sad Dar*, *Jamaspi* and *Arda Viraf Namah* inspired the clergy and laity in their conduct of life at this period rather than the *Gathas* and other Avestan works. The anticipation of the joys of heaven and the fear of the sufferings of hell, guided and controlled man’s life upon earth. Man’s soul and his Farohar were taken to be synonymous in the Revayets.

The 16th century was a landmark in Parsi history. Akbar, the Moghul emperor of India wished to study the different religions that were practised in his country and invited delegates to visit his court. From all over India richly attired and very large delegations arrived. Dastur Meherji Rana a priest from Navsari was accompanied by just a couple of men dressed all in white. He looked dignified in his spotless white clothes and his flowing beard. Akbar was greatly impressed by the priest and his description of the Zoroastrian religion. It is said that the

THE LANDING

FROM A VERY SMALL, HUNTED, HUNGRY, HARASSED, MOTLEY CROWD, THAT CAME SWARMING ON TO THE SHORES OF THIS LAND IN COUNTRY CRAFTS AND LITTLE BOATS HAS DEVELOPED INTO WHAT THE WORLD PROCLAIMS TO BE THE 'CREAM' OF THIS COUNTRY'S STATESMEN, INDUSTRIALISTS, SCIENTISTS, DOCTORS, LAWYERS, ARTISTS, SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND EVEN FORMING AN ARISTOCRACY WITHIN ITSELF



great Dastur invested Akbar with the Sudreh and Kusti and even installed the Sacred Fire with due Zoroastrian rites. He returned to Navsari in 1597 and the Parsis received him enthusiastically. He was later conferred with the hereditary title of Dastur.

As a mark of respect to Meherji Rana, Akbar awarded him 200 bighas of land as a subsistence allowance and the award was later increased when passed on to his son. It is said that Tansen, the famous singer who was present in the court, during Meherji's visit commemorated it by composing a beautiful khyal in his honour. In it the Dastur is described as the long-bearded Parsi Mehriar, the 'flower of paradise'.

In 1721, a learned Mobed Jamasp came to Surat from Kerman. After meeting a number of priests there, he felt that the Indian Zoroastrian priests were lacking in religious knowledge and could certainly benefit if he held a series of talks with leading high priests during his stay in India. The Dasturs of Surat, Navsari and Broach therefore called on him, held a series of talks with him and in time became his disciples. The first amongst these was one Dastur Darab, later to become the teacher of Anquetil du Perron.

By now the Europeans had discovered India, and with the advent of the Portuguese, the Parsis began to look for trade openings with them. They began learning the new languages, which enabled them to act as interpreters between the Europeans and the native population. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch, the French and the British, all of whom found the Parsis most useful for their purpose, in as much as they were quick to understand and could adapt themselves quickly to circumstances. There were no caste restrictions or inhibitions about untouchability vis-a-vis a foreign race.

About that time, Bombay was ceded to the British by the Crown of Portugal as part of the dowry of the Infanta Catherine of Braganza on her marriage to King Charles II of England (1661). The king seems to have found this distant acquisition of his so unprofitable that he got rid of it by bestowing it in 1668 upon the East India Company on payment of an annual rent of £10 in gold. In a letter, dated Bombay 18th January 1671, Sir Streynshan Master, one of the four leading servants of the East India Company who decided in 1668, to go to Bombay and take over charge of the island from the King's Officers, writes, "Here are also some Parsis, but they are lately come since the English had the island, and are most of them weavers and have not any place to do their devotion in or to bury their dead."

Thus, when the British began building up Bombay, the Parsis whose stronghold till then was at Surat, gradually began moving on to Bombay. They acted as interpreters and were known as Dobhashias. The word Dobhashias is a compound of two words, 'Do' meaning two and 'Bhashas' meaning languages. In other words, they knew two languages. The British called them Dubashes and many Parsi families have thus acquired the surname of Dubash.

The Awakening

(Last 300 years up-to-date)

Many writers are apt to paint the first 1000 years spent by the Parsis in India, in a rosier shade than was so. They were undoubtedly hard times. Time and again, the Parsis were scurrying from one town to another with their Sacred Fire. At best, they became petty merchants, farmers, weavers and carpenters. The change between this period and the one immediately after, is tremendous and can bear no comparison. In one, they belonged to a class of hardworking peasantry and in the other, they rose to the highest in the land. They had an aristocracy, they were great bankers, merchant princes, industrialists, intellectuals and the cream of the society. The only thing, they strictly abstained from when India won her freedom, was politics and the rule of the country.

All this was achieved in less than 200 years (1725-1925) and that too without rousing the jealousy and the animosity of other communities in India. It was indeed a great awakening for the Parsis, an awakening not only of the mind, but of the soul also—for without the power of God such miracles do not take place.

The coming of the Westerners and particularly the British, no doubt did make a great difference. They brought enlightenment, for not only were business opportunities provided, but a first-class education on a wide scale. However, an event of even greater proportion and farreaching consequences took place around this time in 1754. This was the coming to India of a young Frenchman called Anquetil du Perron. The man was later to be hailed as the Godfather of Zoroastrian research and with his coming events would take place which would awaken the soul in the Parsis.

Anquetil du Perron, a young soldier, once happened to see a facsimile of some pages written in Avesta characters, which was circulated as a mere curiosity. Actuated by the desire of earning the glory of being the first to reveal the *Zend-Avesta* to Europeans, he set out for western India in order to purchase manuscripts of all the sacred books of the Zoroastrian religion, to obtain a thorough knowledge of their contents, and of the religious customs of the Parsis from their priests.



A devout Parsi praying at a temple well

In Gujarat, he was able to procure manuscripts and instructions in the Avesta and Pahlavi languages. When he found himself proficient enough in the Avesta and Pahlavi, he set about making a French translation of the whole *Zend-Avesta*. He commenced that work in March 1759 and was engaged in it upto the time of his departure. Ten years later, he published in 1770/1771 the fruits of his zeal and industry—his highly important work in the French on the *Zend-Avesta*.

This groundwork for Avesta studies in Europe created an immense sensation when it was published. A new world of ideas seemed to have been opened to European scholars; the veil which covered the mysteries of the famous founder of the Zoroastrian religion seemed to be lifted. But the philosophers were soon greatly disappointed, for the chief question, however, was the authenticity of these books. Some contested, others advocated it. In England, the opinion prevailed that the books were forged and Anquetil imposed upon by the priests. In France, the authenticity of these books was not doubted, and Anquetil's great merits were at once acknowledged. In Germany, the opinion of scholars was at issue. Some, as Meiners and Tychsen, acknowledged the veracity of the proofs ranged against the genuineness of the books. Another renowned German scholar, Kleuker, not only admitted the authenticity of Anquetil's work but translated the whole of it into German.



The Bhicaji Behram well, Bombay

For almost 50 years, controversy raged over Anquetil's work till a great Danish scholar Rask, proved in 1826 the close affinity of the *Zend-Avesta* language to Sanskrit, and demonstrated that the manuscripts and books brought to Europe by Anquetil could not be forgeries. From then on, other scholars like Eugene Burnouf, Professor of Sanskrit at the College de France at Paris, took up Anquetil's work and enlightenment about the Zoroastrian religion followed. Anquetil du Perron furnished Europe with the first material for research and by his translation introduced the literary world to the chief contents of the sacred books of the Zoroastrians.

In the lifetime of Spitama Zarathushtra, the Iranians must have heard about the Zoroastrian religion in all its pristine clarity, beauty and sublimity. After that time, the religion was interpreted by the priests and because of the restrictive nature of the language, one wonders how much of its fullness may have been passed on to the multitude in later periods. In spite of the loss of most of our Holy Scripture, eminent and devoted scholars like Spiegel, Haug, Darmesteter, Westergaard, Geldner, Max Mueller, West, Mills, Jackson and others, in their writings have

described the religion of Zarathushtra with sufficient clarity to show its beauty and sublimity. Possibly the Parsis learnt more about Zarathushtra from the above than people in other ages must have learnt from the priests after Zarathushtra, as the language slowly died out.

From 1825 onwards, the Zoroastrian religion inspired a great deal of scholarship, all over the world. Some negative, some downright against the religion, but generally most recognised the greatness of Zarathushtra and his religion and with each succeeding generation with greater clarity. Among the Parsis, leading figures like Cursetji Rustamji Cama, Dr. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, Dastur Dr. Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, Dr. Irach Taraporewala and many others furthered the knowledge of the religion. Many eminent foreign scholars visited India; some stayed for years, others months. They mingled with Parsi families, made speeches, held seminars, published books and papers. The Zoroastrian religion came to be known by the community and a fresh awareness of its beauty was felt by the Parsis. They lived as a race born again and their new found knowledge about Mazda made all the difference in the way they moved about this country and the world. They had the touch of God with them—a grateful God who saw to it that their every new endeavour prospered.

There were times when some in the West were cruel in their indictment of the Zoroastrian religion, but by and large the Parsis ignored them. They were Zarhostis and they acted by the dictates of their religion which infuses all the better qualities of man in them. It was but natural that the westerners who came to India should move closer to them than the other community and give them the lion's share of their business and their trust.

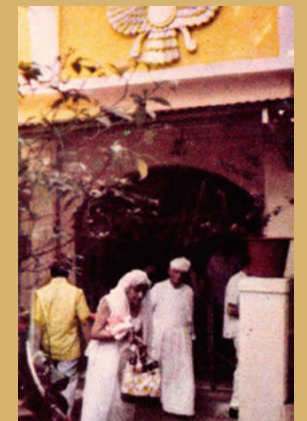
At the turn of the century if anyone asked a Parsi who he was, the answer would be, "I am a Zarhosti," (Zoroastrian in Gujarati). Very rarely would you hear the word Parsi. It was a common thing to hear our elders tell the young, "We are Zarhostis, our word is our bond and there are things we can do and there are things we Zarhostis will never do," when referring to anything dishonourable or dishonest. A Parsi maybe anything, but only a true and devout Parsi is a Zarhosti.

This does not imply that before the second period, the Parsis were not a God-fearing and decent people. Now there was a greater emphasis and a surety of purpose due to a greater awareness of their God and a better understanding of their religion. Once this religion was an obscure but good religion of a band of fugitives. Now in the eyes of the world, Zarathushtra was the Prophet of the Great God Ahuramazda, whose religion was one of the most ancient and whose devotees had ruled over two world empires. Verily, it was rebirth for the Parsis and so we go back to Surat and the exodus of the Parsis to Bombay.

Akbar, the Moghul Emperor, was chiefly responsible for Surat's wellbeing and fame. In the 16th century, it was one of the chief cities of



The Cusrow Baug Fire Temple



The Ashlaji Fire Temple



A Parsi home



BOMBAY

The heartland of the Parsis
A living memorial to their
efforts and enterprise.



... and yet another Parsi home



Sorabjee Shapurjee Bengalee
Social Reformer

India as it had a fine port. Its trade with Europe and Great Britain was increasing rapidly and the country prospered with it. By the 17th century, the Parsis were now mainly in Surat. The establishment of European trading companies at Surat at once brought the community to the front. The true era of Parsi prosperity had dawned on that day. The Parsis were adaptable, intelligent and had business acumen and integrity. Due to these qualities the closest confidence and the most cordial relationship was established between the Parsis and the colonial powers. The Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and the English factories would have found it almost impossible to conduct their trading and banking operations without the Parsis.

One Rustam Maneck, who was born in Surat in the year 1635, was the chief broker of the English factory at Surat. He was reputed to be a man of great ability and excellent character, and had been most useful in advancing English interests in that town. He often smoothed over the difficulties which arose between the English and the Officers of the Moghul with whom also he possessed great influence.

In the year 1660, many impediments were thrown in the way of the English by the Nawab of the City. Rustam Maneck took the bold step of approaching Aurangzeb in Delhi for redress. Aurangzeb was pleased with the way the Parsi Rustam Maneck had espoused the cause of the Englishman. Therefore, strict injunctions were issued not to molest the English in any way at Surat and the emperor even made a free gift of land for building the factory.

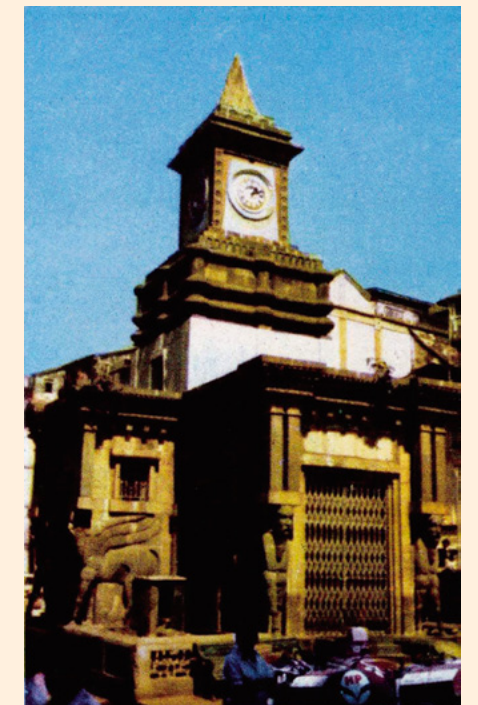
Rustam Maneck also furthered Surat's general interests. Whenever an occasion arose, he sided with the aggrieved, and did his utmost to obtain redress wherever a wrong had been inflicted. As an instance, a ship belonging to a Turkish merchant named Usman Chalebi, was unwarrantedly seized by a Portuguese man-of-war. The Turk approached Rustam Maneck for assistance. That gentleman at once went to Goa and appealed for justice to the Portuguese Governor-General, Senor Vizrael. The outcome of his effort was satisfactory, both to himself and to his client.

But it was not all smooth sailing with the Parsis as brokers and interpreters. Often misunderstandings arose, putting them to a great deal of inconvenience and trouble. For instance, from the authentic papers in the possession of the descendants of Rustam Maneck it is found that after his death in 1721, a dispute arose between his sons and the officers of the English factory as to the amount due by the latter to Rustam's estate. Great pressure was brought to bear upon Rustam's heirs to forego their claim. The then head of the English factory at Surat, Mr. Hope induced Momin Khan, the Nawab of Surat, through the intervention of Governor William Phipps of Bombay, to imprison Framji Rustamji, the eldest son of Mr. Rustam, and to attack Rustam's house. Framji was also fined Rs. 50,000 by the Nawab and made to pay Rs. 200 daily for the supply of food to the members and servants of his family.

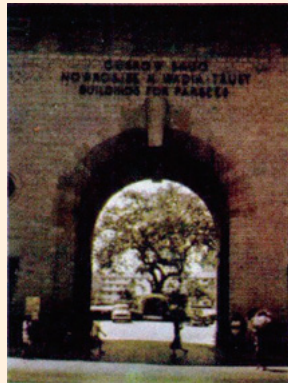
As may be surmised, this oppression filled the family with dismay as it seemed a hard return for the valuable services the family had rendered to the English. Bomanji, the younger brother of Framji Rustamji, went to Bombay to seek redress from the Governor. Instead of getting the justice which he expected, he was placed under surveillance and was unable to go anywhere beyond the limits of the island. With justice nowhere in sight, Naoroji Rustamji, the youngest of the brothers, sailed for Europe in the man-of-war Salisbury, in the hope of obtaining redress in London. He reached England in April 1723 and was received most kindly by the Court of Directors (of the East India Company). At last, the English sense of justice prevailed, and all claims in dispute were referred by mutual consent for arbitration. After this settlement of the dispute Naoroji Rustamji was presented by the court of directors with a dress of honour before his return to Bombay. He was thus the first Parsi who went to England.

Bombay now belonged to the British and the Parsis began to move into this city. At Surat they were mostly in service, but in Bombay they became more enterprising and moved into business. Due to the unrest in the land, the British wanted to fortify Bombay, and gave the contract for fortification to one Cursetji Pochaji Panday in 1665. The Parsi population began to grow and by 1659 the Shapurji Sorabji Kapavala Fire Temple came into existence and by 1672 the Modi Hirji Vacha Fire Temple, as well as a Tower of Silence. Bombay began to prosper under the fine government of Governor Gerald Aungier and its population rose from 10,000 to 60,000 and the number of Parsis was substantial.

One of the earliest Parsi settlers in Bombay, probably the first, was Dorabjee Nanabhai, the founder of the well-known Patel family which produced many men of fame. He came with his family from Mora Sumari (near Surat) in A.D 1640 and was appointed by the Portuguese as their agent to deal with the indigenous population. This duty he continued to perform even after the English took possession of Bombay. On his death in 1669, his son Rustam was confirmed by the English in all the offices which his father had held. But Rustamji Dorabjee made his mark in history by saving Bombay for the English at one time from the invading Sidis (Abyssinians). About 1489, an Abyssinian disguised himself as a merchant and smuggled 300 soldiers to Janjira (an island 44 miles from Bombay) in 300 large boxes. They took possession of this island and lived there on piracy ever since. In 1690, they attacked Bombay and were repelled. Two years later, there was a great plague in the city because of which the British evacuated Bombay. Thinking it opportune, the Sidis once again attacked Bombay in great strength. Realising the gravity of the emergency, Rustamji raised a militia from among the Koli fishermen of the island population, fought the invaders with his small, motley army and defeated them. This done, he sent a message to the English factory at Surat which immediately sent reinforcements and took back charge of the Bombay government from Rustamji who had held the fort for three days. In return for this



Parsi Bazaar Gate
an old Parsi landmark of Bombay



Cusrow Baug
one of the housing estates

service, among other things, the hereditary title of Patel (Chief) of Bombay was conferred upon Rustamji, and he was also given some civil and criminal jurisdiction over the Kolis of Bombay. The Cowasji Patel tank was built in Bombay in 1776 by his eldest son of that name after whom the Cowasji Patel Street, in the Fort area is also named.

Not only was the Patel family one of the first Parsi families to settle in Bombay, but when in 1774 the British took Thana and Bassein from the Marathas and entrusted the administration of those places to Cowasji and his younger brother Dorabji (1754-1804) that family was again the first Parsi family to settle in Thana where it built Fire Temples and Towers of Silence for the Parsis who followed them there. The Patelships of Bombay and Thana remained in this family for 165 years Bomanji Byramji Patel (1849-1908), the first editor of Parsi Prakash which records in Gujarati important events in the history of the community from the time of its arrival in India, was a scion of this family.

Bombay Dockyard is a monument to the industry, enterprise and integrity of a Parsi family known as the Wadias. Lovji Nusserwanji, the founder of the Wadia family and the first of a long line of naval architects, was born in Surat in the year 1710. He was employed in the East India Company's Surat dockyard. In 1735, a Parsi, Dhanjibhai by name, became a master builder at Surat. In that year, a vessel called the Queen was built in the dock at Surat for the company under the foremanship of young Lovji. Lovji taught his craft to two of his sons, Maneckji and Bomanji. They entered the dockyard, working as common carpenters for a paltry sum of Rs. 12 a month. But in due course, they acquired under their father's instruction such proficiency in naval architecture that by their united exertions they made the Bombay Dockyard famous in the country. Before his death, Lovji was presented by order of the Board of Directors with a silver foot rule with the inscription, "A Memorial from the East India Company, of the long and faithful services of Lovji, their Master Builder at Bombay, Anno 1772."

Bomanji's son, Jamshedji, built in 1872 the Cornwallis, a frigate of 50 guns, for the East India Company, and his expertise prompted the British Government to order the construction of ships for the Royal Navy at Bombay. Thus Jamshedji was the first of the Parsi master builders to be entrusted by the Lords of the Admiralty with the building of men-of-war in India. He designed and built 16 men-of-war and 40 large ships.

Some of Lovji's descendants opted for business, particularly Jehangir Nusserwanji (1786-1843) who amassed a fortune which was bequeathed to his only child Motlibai Maneckji Naoroji Wadia (1811- 1897). This wealthy and charitable widow gave Rs. 2.6 million to various charities, and left her estate to her son, Naoroji (1837-1909) who utilised his mother's vast fortune and his own, to create the N.M. Wadia Charities Trust for catholic charities in any part of the world, taking effect from the date of his demise and valued at the time at Rs. 8.8 million.



As the community is small and magnanimous, it tries to be self-reliant by assisting its needy members. Public trusts in Bombay, the headquarters of the community which benefit its members are today of the value of Rs. 290 million, those for the benefit of the Hindus are valued at Rs. 220 million and for Muslim beneficiaries are of the value of Rs. 80 million, there being similar Parsi charities outside Bombay as well. It is interesting to note here that the Parsis form 0.02 per cent of the Indian population.

Industrialist Jamshedji N. Tata
Father of Industrial India.

The major portion of this Parsi charity in Bombay is for housing purposes, educational facilities and medical relief. The mill barons Sir Cusrow (1869-1950) and Sir Ness (1873-1952), sons of Naoroji Nusserwanji (1849-1899), another descendant of Lovji, and their mother Jerbai (1852-1926) utilised their wealth to provide, among other things the badly needed housing facilities for the Parsis of that city. A prominent scion of Lovji today is Neville, son of Sir Ness. He is an enterprising businessman with interests in chemical, textiles and other industries and is the first Indian on the Board of Directors of a bank in the United Kingdom, the National & Grindlays Bank.

A noteworthy contribution made to industry is by the Godrej family. When 30, Ardeshir Barjorji Godrej (1867-1936) gave up the legal profession to venture into the industrial world of steel locks. The taste of success goaded him to go in for manufacturing safes in 1900,



The Cancer Hospital



The Jehangir Art Gallery



The Hanging Garden of Bombay



The Taj Mahal Hotel



Dinshaw Wacha
with Eros Cinema in the rear



The Tata House

in partnership with one Mr. Boyce. Eighteen years later, he devoted his expertise to manufacturing soap, his brother Phirozshah took over the security-equipment business. In time, their business flourished and today, Godrej is the biggest private owner in the land of a factory to manufacture locks, safes, toilet preparations, steel furniture, typewriters and refrigerators, having more than 7000 employees. The story of Godrej is the story of the entrepreneurial achievement of a single family, thanks to free enterprise.

Phirozshah and members of his family recently created the GodrejTrust to the tune of more than Rs. 6 million (with the intention of augmenting it to many more millions of rupees) for education, relief of poverty, housing and medical relief, and for any public purpose without distinction of community, religion, caste or creed.

But the greatest luminary and household word amongst Parsis and Indians in the fields of commerce, industry and manufacturing enterprise is that of Mr. Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata, founder of the House of Tatas. He was born in 1859, and studied upto the matric standard. About that time, his father, the late Nusserwanji Tata, was trading on a large scale with China but he found that in this trade the middlemen as agents used to corner most of the profit. Therefore, he dispatched his young son, Jamshedji, to China to establish a firm there.

Accordingly, 20 year-old Jamshedji with no knowledge either of the language or the country, nor of the trade, left for Hongkong itself. Friendless and with no experience of the world, the long and tiring voyage afforded the youth time to ponder on whither he would go, where he would stay and what the country would be like. On reaching Hongkong, he took a man-pulled rickshaw, to meet his father's agent, Chan Took. The agent called his interpreter and, after satisfying himself with the letters of recommendation from young Jamshedji's father, he put him up in a small hotel.

Due to his intrinsic talents, Jamshedji soon settled down in China, became conversant with the language and managed the trade so efficiently that during his three-year Chinese sojourn, his father made many millions. At the same time his father began dealing in cotton, for which there was a growing demand both in England and America, with the result that, here again, through the energy and resources of his young son, Nusserwanji made a fortune.

At the time British banks were not according the kind of facilities to Indian merchants as they did to their own countrymen. After consulting a business associate, Nusserwanji came to the conclusion that it would be best if a branch of one of the Bombay banks was opened in London. But a suitable manager could not be found to go over to England to start and establish it. Thereupon the firm in Hongkong was closed down and Jamshedji returned to Bombay in 1863. On arrival, his father asked him to prepare himself to go to England and open a branch there

of his firm. During this time, unfortunately, the price of cotton seed began to fall considerably in the world market, the trade received a great setback and Jamshedji's father had scotched the idea of sending his son to England. Unfortunately the father began to lose all the wealth that he had accumulated due to the crash of the cotton market.

After his father's death, in 1868 Jamshedji established the private trading firm of Tata & Company with a capital of Rs. 21,000. That year a dispute arose between Britain and King Theodore of Abyssinia over the waters of the river Nile of which one source is in East Africa- Lake Victoria—and the other from a lake in Abyssinia known as Tana. The conflict prompted the British to send an army against King Theodore and young Jamshedji clinched a deal to supply food stuffs to the British Army. So, once again, with his keen business sagacity he began making money.

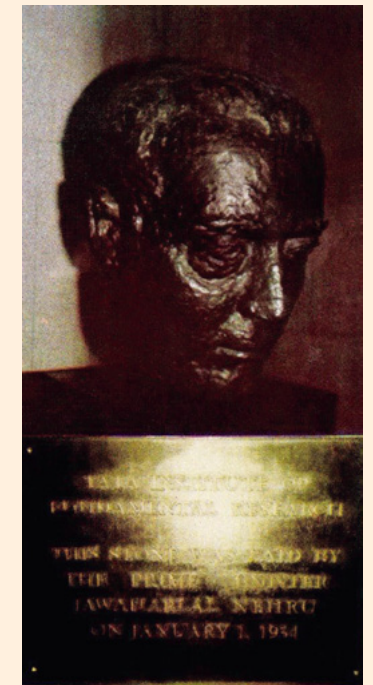
With the defeat of Theodore, Jamshedji returned to India and began to lay the foundation of his industrial empire. Jamshedji's greatest asset was his sense of timing, his nose for the right business at the right time and his thoroughness in all he did and most important of all, his farsightedness.

In an age, when to industrialise was an unthinkable act, he began to lay the foundation of an industrial conglomerate. He set up textile mills, but before he entered this business, he personally, acquired thorough knowledge by going to Lancashire, the heart of the textile centre of England to get an insight into it. So, came the chain of textile mills in the most appropriate parts of India.

When science was just a distant dream, he dared to set up the Indian Institute of Science with the help of the State of Mysore. Later came the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay, all in the same tradition of being far ahead of times. The same can be said of his hotel venture, his steel mills at Jamshedpur, his hydro-electric works and power supply stations and the many industrial ventures, right up to computers in the present age, which have now become legions and the back-bone of Industrial India.

In 1907, Tata Sons & Co. Ltd., was formed, consisting of Sir Dorab J. Tata and Sir Ratan J. Tata, worthy sons of the founder and Mr. R.D. Tata, their cousin, with a capital of Rs. 150 million. This was converted in 1917 into Tata Sons Limited, a private limited company, with an authorised capital of Rs. 225 million which now control one of the largest single aggregation of Indian industry. About 85% of the huge capital of Tata Sons is held by charitable trusts endowed by members of the Tata family. A major proportion of the profits of the firm is thus being continuously ploughed back into philanthropic objects, and so back to the people.

Mr. J.R.D. Tata, a descendant of the founder is the Chairman today. It was his energy and enterprise that brought the aviation industry in



T.I.F.R.
brainchild of Bhabha



J R.D. Tata



Air India Headquarters



Marine Drive
... in the backdrop
the Tower of Silence



Central Bank of India

India into international prominence. In 1932, the Tata Air Lines was founded, and in 1948, Air India International. Both were nationalised in 1953, and renamed Indian Airlines and Air India Ltd. Tatas were closely associated with the Government in their functioning, and for many years J.R.D. Tata was the Chairman of Air India International and the mainspring behind the Airline acquiring a first-class international reputation.

Today Tata interests span electronics and computers, iron and steel, locomotives and locomotive boilers, diesel trucks, bus-chassis, engineering equipment (mechanical and electrical), machine tools, agricultural machinery and implements, textiles, textile machinery, electric power, chemicals, cement, vegetable oils, soaps and toilet products, industrial investment, insurance, radios, hotels, airconditioning and refrigeration equipment, pharmaceuticals, antibiotics, and vitamins. Tata is now synonymous with industry and enterprise in Bombay particularly and in India generally, and this is borne out by the fact that the House of Tata has gradually branched out into various industries and manufacturing concerns all over India. The profits are largely devoted to philanthropic purposes, the various Tata trust being amongst the largest in the country.

Another field in which Parsis excelled was banking. Some of the wealthiest rulers and princes in the states consulted Parsis such as Vicaji Pestanji, Cooverji B. Taraporvala and others on financial problems. Vicaji Meherji (1781-1853) and Pestanji Meherji (1799-1854) from the sea-port town of Tarapore in Tharia district gained distinction as revenue-farming contractors and as bankers in the last century. They were also financiers to the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Nizam's mint at Aurangabad being in their charge.

Cooverji B. Taraporvala (1896-1969) a member of the family of Vicaji Meherji and Pestanji Meherji, started as an officer in the Imperial Bank of India. After nine years, he joined the Finance Department of the Nizam's Government in 1930 to ultimately become the Financial Secretary in 1946. Two years later His Exalted Highness, the Nizam, rewarded his financial acumen and uprightness by appointing him his Financial Adviser.

Framroze Edulji Dinshaw (1873-1936) was a solicitor and the financial agent of the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior. The Maharaja entrusted the management of 100 to 150 million rupees to Framroze Edulji, Dinshaw who proved an impetus to Bombay's industrial life on more than one occasion by his judicious use of those funds. The recent Financial Adviser was Dr. Rustam Cooper.

The big 3 in Indian Banks, namely Central Bank of India, Bank of India and Union Bank of India have had close association with Parsi families and owe their present stature and position to men like Sir Sorabji N. Pochkhanawala, Sir Pheroze Sethna, Mr. Cooverji Bhabha, Mr. A.D.

Shroff and Sir Cowasji Jehangir. Since 1969 these Banks have all been nationalised along with all the other Indian Banks, but the management still rest mainly in Parsi hands.

During the few hundred years of British rule of India, five baronetcies were awarded by the British. From these, one was a Hindu, another a Muslim and the other three Parsis. They were Sir Jamshedji Jejeebhoy, Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit and Sir Cowasji Jehangir.

Sir Jamshedji Jejeebhoy (1783-1859) was the son of Jejeebhoy Chanjeebhoy Vatcha of Navsari. He made five voyages to China and was one of the original partners there of the Princely House of Jardine, Matheson and Co. Ltd. He carried on extensive and lucrative trade between India and China, importing into India glass-bangles, bottles, silk and tea and exporting cotton goods, spices and opium to China. As he nearly monopolised the bottle trade he was known as "Bottlewala or Batlivala". On his fourth voyage to China in 1805, the English and the French were at war then and the English vessel in which he was travelling was captured by the French near Ceylon, and all on board, including Jamshedji, were imprisoned and taken to an unknown destination. The prisoners were ultimately set free at False Bay, not far from Cape Town, southern Africa, and Jamshedji managed to return to India by a Dutch ship bound for Calcutta, six months after he had left Bombay. Jamshedji not only built a fortune, but he knew how to spend it wisely.

Having empirical experience of poverty, the more money he amassed, the more he gave in charity. It is estimated that he donated Rs. 2.5 million to various public charities, besides his private ones. His vast catholic charities, his integrity and honesty of purpose in all dealings, made him, and the Parsi community known outside India too. In 1842 he was the first Indian to be knighted and became the first Indian baronet 15 years later. He made beneficial suggestions to the community on many occasions and attacked the harmful customs that had crept into the community and thereby paved the way for social reformers like Dadabhai Naoroji, Bengali, Malabari and others after him. His life was the enactment of the belief of that famous historian, James Froude: "One lesson, and only one, history may be said to repeat with distinctness: that the world is built somehow on moral foundations—that in the long run it is well with the good: in the long run it is ill with the wicked."

The final leading personality amongst the Parsis in the last century, of whom mention must be made here, is Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit (1823-1901). Nusserwanji Cowasji, the founder of the family, came to Bombay from Surat in 1785. As a shipping agent, he came in contact with the French who called him "petit" because of his short stature, and he and his family therefore came to be known from that time as Petit. He subsequently started his own firm and amassed a fortune, but lost a good portion of it when a ship carrying his merchandise



New India Assurance



Flora Fountain



Sir Jamshedji Jejeebhoy Bart.
Merchant Prince



The Parsi General Hospital

sank. He was also unsuccessful in the subsequent litigation against the insurance company. His son, Maneckji, who embarked on a business career by going to Muscat, however, retrieved the position. He was a prominent businessman and, in addition, a respected leader of the community. He was chiefly responsible for sending Maneckji Hantaria to Iran in 1854, to assist the Iranian Zoroastrians who were being persecuted by the Muslims. Of Maneckji's two sons, Dinshaw and Nusserwanji, the former was an outstanding figure in the field of commerce, industry and charity as well. Neither of the brothers suffered a loss for their rash investments during the stocks and shares mania that gripped Bombay after the American Civil War. But Dinshaw lost about Rs. 3 million loaned to friends, who were unable to repay.

Besides other enterprises, Dinshaw revolutionised the cotton spinning and weaving industry of Bombay, and converted the city into the Manchester of the East. Although the first cotton spinning mill worked by steam was started in Bombay by Cowasji Nanabhai Davar in 1854, Sir Dinshaw managed and practically owned half a dozen cotton spinning and weaving mills in the city. His charities came next to those of Sir Jamshedji, nearly Rs. 2 million. For his benevolent deeds he was knighted in 1887 and made a baronet three years later. The Bomanji Dinshaw Petit Parsi General Hospital, established in Bombay in 1912, is a lasting testimony to the philanthropic munificence of Dinshaw's second son, Bomanji (1859-1915).

Sir Cowasji Jehangir also played a leading role in the development of commerce in Bombay. The family traces its origin to three brothers from Navsari who migrated to Bombay in 1717. They were Muncherjee, Heerjee and Temuljee Jivanjee. Heerjee Jivanji traded with China and his wealth grew. As he had no children, he adopted the eldest son of one of his relatives. This lad, Jehangir, married his cousin Meherbai, and their second son, Cowasji Jehangir was the father of the baronet.

The first Sir Cowasji Jehangir (1812-1878) was apprenticed as a clerk to the British firm of Duncan Gibb and Co. In 1846, having gained experience in other British firms as well, he started his own cotton firm. In the crash of 1865, he suffered comparatively little loss. In 1860 he was appointed Income Tax Commissioner and in 1872, he was knighted. His charities were fabulous. He endowed several hospitals, and donated large sums for education to such institutions as the Sir Cowasji Jehangir College at Poona. He died in 1878, leaving substantial legacies to all his domestic help.

His adopted son and successor, Sir Cowasji Jehangir was educated at Elphinstone College, and knighted in his own right in 1895. He was made a baronet in 1908, the third Indian to be so honoured. He also carried on a big business in cotton and donated large sums to charity and for education. He built the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall in Bombay and financed the Readymoney Wing at the Imperial Institute in London.



Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit Bart.
Merchant Prince

Sir Cowasji Jehangir, the second baronet (1879-1962), carried on the family tradition. He was the Chairman of various banks and insurance companies, and a Director of several Tata concerns. In 1930, he was elected a member of the Central Legislative Assembly and attended the first and second Round Table Conferences in London in 1930 and 1931, respectively. His wife, Lady Hirabai, who was born in the illustrious Wadia family of shipbuilders, was an active social worker and had the distinction of being the first woman President of the Board of Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat as well as the first woman to be President of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, the apex Parsi institution in India. During her tenure as Chairman of the Board of Trustees she made a break with tradition to hold the Panchayat's first press conference. Aside from her activities in a host of charitable institutions, she managed the family's financial affairs, was Chairman and Director of several companies and went out of her way to help young entrepreneurs.

The year 1850 witnessed a growing feeling of unrest and a desire for change amongst Indian intellectuals. Freedom from British rule was still an idea taking shape in the minds of thinking people and not a burning issue. Slowly discontent began to grow and the first wave swept India violently into the mutiny of 1857 against the British.

Earlier mention has been made that once India won her independence, Parsis kept aloof and did not take an active part in governing the country. But initially, when freedom was yet to become a reality, the Parsis had their stalwarts. They were represented by Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Phirozshah Meherwanji Mehta, Dinshaw Edulji Wacha, K.F. Nariman, Sir Homi Modi and others.

In 1825, a great leader was born amongst the Parsis, who in time became famous on the sub-continent as the "Grand Old Man of India". He was Dadabhai Naoroji who was born in a very poor but a respectable priestly family. He was so poor that as a child he used to study under a pavement lamp-post, as his family could ill afford a lamp at home. In time, he turned out to be a brilliant scholar and was Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Elphinstone College from where he had graduated. Dadabhai Naoroji carried on his fight for freedom both in India and England and eventually became the first member of the British House of Commons in London. In time, two other Indians were elected to the British Parliament by the British electorate making all three Parsis. These were Sir Mancherjee Meherwanjee Bhownagree and Shapurji Dorabji Saklatvala.

Mr. Naoroji's other great contribution was to help organise what is now known as the Indian National Congress. Dadabhai was made the President of the Congress at Lahore and was President again in 1893 and 1906. Jawaharlal Nehru was the only other person to be President of the Indian Congress four times. Of the first meeting of the Congress in 1885, Nehru said, "One name towers above all others—that of



Lady Hirabai Cowasji Jehangir
a gracious lady and philanthropist



Sir Cowasji Jehangir Bart.
Merchant Prince



Admiral Jal Cursetji
Chief of Naval Staff



Air Chief Marshal Aspi Engineer



Dadabhai Naoroji, who became the Grand Old Man of India and who first used the word Swaraj (self government) for India's goal." Dadabhai Naoroji's masterly work *Poverty and un-British Rule in India* exposed and analysed the extent to which India was bled white by the British. He actively spent much of his time redressing injustice under the colonial regime and there was hardly any movement in this country whether of education, social reform or intellectual pursuit, with which he was not connected.

Sir Phirozshah Mehta not only dominated the Bombay Municipal Corporation in his days, but served immeasurably through the Indian National Congress, the Bombay Legislative Council, the Imperial Legislative Council and the University of Bombay as well. In his message, to the citizens of Bombay who met to mourn Sir Phirozshah Mehta's death, Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, referred to him as "A great Parsi, a great citizen, a great patriot and a great Indian." Dr. Dadabhai, Sir Phirozshah and Sir Dinshaw Wacha fought for the liberation of their motherland through constitutional means. Wacha created and educated public opinion on matters of finance and economics by his voluminous writings. But there was another Parsi, a lady, who did not believe in achieving independence peacefully and who had to therefore remain in exile with headquarters in France. She was Madame Bhikaiji Cama who was born in Bombay in 1861 and died in France in 1936. She was the daughter-in-law of Khurshedji Rustamji Cama. Long before India voiced her aspirations to swaraj or independence, she had designed a flag for a free India and had unfurled it in England; the British promptly expelled her from the country, whereupon she settled in Paris, fighting for freedom till the last. In her memory, the Indian Government issued a postage stamp with her photograph bearing the date 1861-1936.

In the armed forces as well, Parsis have made their mark. When a combined Medical Directorate was formed, the first Indian to be appointed Director-General of the Armed Forces Medical Services was a Parsi, General Masters.

In the Indian Air Force, the four Engineer brothers, Aspi, Minoo, Jangoo and Ronnie are among the most highly decorated. When aviation was in its infancy, Aspi Engineer and J.R.D. Tata were the first two Indians to fly solo, India to U.K., in mono-planes. Aspi Engineer became an Ace Pilot and was Air Chief Marshal. He was also India's ambassador to Iran.

In the Indian Navy too, Parsis distinguished themselves. Admiral Jal Cursetji is the first Parsi to be appointed Naval Chief of Staff (March 1976). Five years earlier, he had been decorated with the Param Vashisht Seva Medal. Cursetji joined the training ship, Dufferin, in 1935. Two years later, he stood first in India in the qualifying examination and was selected for the Royal Indian Navy. When World War II broke out, Cursetji saw active service as Sub-Lt. with the British Navy and his ship.

Sir Phirozshah Mehta
Uncrowned king of Bombay

the battle cruiser, H.M.S. *Suffolk* was involved in the historic action when the British Navy steamed into the fiords of Narvik and shelled the Nazi batteries on the coast of Norway. The *Suffolk* was sunk but Cursetji survived and returned to India to serve on various ships of the Indian Navy. In 1944 he commanded the H.M.S. *Bombay*, engaged in convoy escort and anti-submarine duties. He specialised in hydrography and was in the forces that surveyed and swept the waters for the Allied advance into Malaysia. He has many sea-going commands to his credit, including the aircraft carrier, I.N.S. *Vikrant*. He was India's first Naval Attache in Washington. In 1969, Cursetji was promoted Vice-Chief of Naval Staff and in 1973, he became Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command. He held this position till his promotion as Naval Chief of Staff.

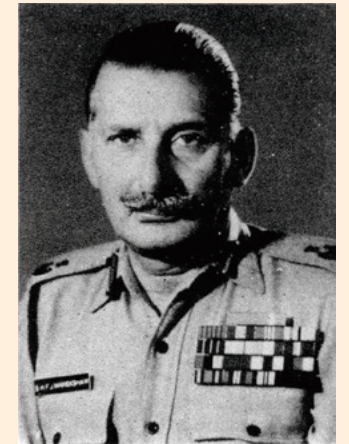
Last, but not the least, the most distinguished Indian in the armed forces is the erstwhile Chief of the Army, Sam Maneckshaw. The rank of Field Marshal was created by the Government of India, for his successful leadership of the armed forces in the 1971 conflict with Pakistan. He is the only Indian to hold this rank.

Born in Amritsar, the fifth child of Dr. and Mrs. H.P. Maneckshaw, Sam was selected for the Indian Military Academy in 1932. Two years later, he was commissioned and seconded to the Royal Scots for a year before joining his parent unit, the Frontier Forces Regiment. Sam Maneckshaw participated in the Ahmedzai Operations in the Northwest Frontier between 1939 and 1941 when the Japanese entered the war. He was involved in the rear guard action on the Sittang river when the British retreated. He was severely wounded and brought to Rangoon for treatment. He was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry in the battle of Sittang.

He was the first Indian to be posted to the Military Operations Directorate at Army Headquarters as GSO 1, in charge of current operations and future planning. After Independence, he was Director of Military Operations, and promoted to the rank of Brigadier. In 1957, he was promoted to the rank of Major General and in 1963 was made Lt. General. From 1964-69, he was placed in command of the Western Army, and then the Eastern Army where he was responsible for negotiating a truce with the Naga and Mizo insurgents for which service he was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1968. The following year, he was promoted to the rank of General and appointed Chief of the Army Staff. In January 1972, he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan for the part he played in the conflict with Pakistan in 1971 and on January 1, 1973, he was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal.

One can turn to any field and a Parsi leads or once led. Take science: Dr Homi Jehangir Bhabha who founded and developed atomic energy research in the country. He was a fellow of the Royal Society, London at the age of thirty-one, the youngest Fellow so far elected.

Statesman Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji
The Grand Old Man of India



Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw
Chief of Army Staff (1969-73)



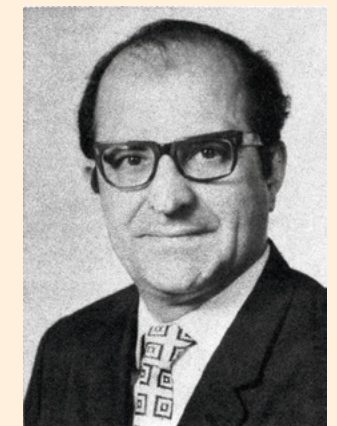
REMEMBER, FOR US ZARTHOSTIS
ALWAYS, DESTINY LIES IN OUR OWN HANDS.

He presided at the first United Nations Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy held at Geneva. He was elected Honorary Fellow of several foreign scientific organisations, including that of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences. In July 1965, he was elected Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet of the Government of India. He put India on the International Nuclear map and firmly laid the foundation of Nuclear Energy establishments in the country.



Dr. Homi J. Bhabha
Foremost Nuclear Scientist

In the legal profession, there is Nani Palkhivala—the foremost Constitutional Lawyer and a top-notch Economist. Following a successful career in business and law he was appointed in 1977 India's Ambassador to the United States of America, the top diplomatic post for any Indian to hold. Born in Bombay on 16th January 1920, Palkhivala took an M.A. degree with honours in English and stood first in both, the L.L.B. examinations and the Advocate (Original Side) examination. He was Professor of Law for several years at the Government Law College in Bombay and the Tagore Professor of Law at Calcutta University. His legal career includes a series of historic cases in India and abroad. The eminent jurist was appointed a member of the First and Second Law Commissions in 1955 and was elected honorary member of the Academy of Political Science, New York, in recognition of his “outstanding public service and distinguished contributions to the advancement of political science.”



Nani Palkhivala
Constitutional Lawyer and Economist

In Music—there is Zubin Mehta, son of the violinist, Mehli Mehta, founder of the Bombay Philharmonic Orchestra and a former leader in the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. He made his debut in America at the age of twenty-three, conducting the Lewisohn Stadium Symphony in New York (1959). The following year he was appointed Conductor of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in 1961. Zubin took over as Conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in December 1977.

And so the roll goes on and on. . .

When the young are told about these great men, invariably the reply is, “But these men were gifted or they were born with a silver spoon in their mouth. How does it help us average people?” They cannot imagine, that a few hundred years ago, Parsis were no more than hardworking peasantry. Almost every man has had to raise himself by his boot-straps. The difference between the two periods is so great that today they just cannot imagine what it was like then. Therefore, all one can do is to ask the young to study their religion a little more deeply and they will learn that if its tenets are followed, every Zarthosti will be a man to be proud of.

Here are excerpts from the lives of two simple uneducated folks. They lived a life like any of us, but they lived it in the spirit of our prayers. The *Yatha Ahu Vairya*, *Ashem Vohu* and *Yenghe Hatam* guided their path. Their names will not go down in history, but they gained the warmth, love and respect of those around them, who realised the intrinsic worth of these two people.



Zubin Mehta—Maestro

The making of a Zarthosti

The year was 1901. A young schoolboy of 17 broke a very valuable vase at home for which misdemeanour his mother gave him a very severe dressing down. The boy was so upset that, on the spur of the moment he decided to run away from his home in Poona. He ran and he ran. . . He reached Bombay and feeling that insufficient, left for Calcutta. Even that, he found was not far enough, so he hopped on a ship bound for Rangoon. The monsoon was in full force. All through the voyage, he was seasick. On disembarking, in Rangoon, he realised that he had only Rs. 2.50 to his name. Drenched by the rain, he crawled under the awning of an office doorway. It seemed almost an eternity before someone tapped him on the shoulder and asked “Aren’t you a Parsi?” The voice belonged to the Parsi Manager of the Singer Sewing Machine Company in whose office door the boy had stood

hungry and shivering. Cables criss-crossed to and from home, but the boy refused to return. Finally, Eruch now a man—for the rains had washed away his boyhood—was employed as a travelling salesman by the company at a salary of Rs. 17/- a month. He could not speak English fluently and no Burmese. However, there were others in the office who spoke English, and more important Burmese, but refused to move out of Rangoon’s safe limits. Eruch therefore, had the dubious distinction of being the first Singer salesman to venture out into the villages of Burma to sell sewing machines with the aid of ‘sign language’. He did a fairly good job of it.

At 20, he became a Singer dealer in the small river-port town of Bassein, 70 miles from the sea and 200 miles from Rangoon. His small business prospered and early in 1908, he went back home, married his 18 year old cousin, Banu, and brought her back with him as wife and helpmate. They had a lot of courage to venture this far into Burma. It was a time when a Burmese would not hesitate to empty others’ pockets or plunge a knife into a person’s bowels.

As the years rolled by, they worked and prospered. The shop was now a general store. Eruch looked after the sale of the sewing machines, cycles, gramophones, records, sports gear and musical instruments such as the harmonium and the concertina. Banu dealt in beads, ribbons, lace, trinkets, and toys. She embroidered with coloured beads, landscapes and flowers onto slippers and bags, and in time, these earned good revenue.

Their shop had become popular and the Burmese called it “the shop without doors and salesmen.” They liked and trusted Eruch’s honesty but they seemed to fear the glare of his serious grey-green eyes. If he was in his chair praying, he would never rise for his customer.

They knew him by now and would call out from afar what they wanted. He would then indicate to them the particular glass cupboard in which the item could be found and if they liked the article, he would during a break in his prayers, call out the price. The customers never bargained. He never permitted it. If the price was acceptable to them, they would open the cupboard, take out the article, place the money on the flat handle of his chair and leave. The shop opened at 7.00 a.m. on the dot and closed at 9.30 p.m. At lunch and dinner, a mechanic would take over but the shop never closed till dusk. Banu had a fixed schedule. In the mornings there was the cleaning to do, getting the children ready for school and then cooking. It was 10.00 a.m. before she was in the shop. Every day she stopped work at 4.00 p.m., went out for a drive and met friends but was home by 6.30 p.m. Eruch never visited and his few close friends came to see him at the shop.

Bassein was a small town with a population of about 15 to 20,000 people most of whom were Chinese and Indians. The latter comprised Muslims, Gujaratis and Telugus. There was a family of Jews with three

brothers and two sisters and another Armenian family of three brothers. There was a Scot river pilot with bow legs and another Parsi called Dinshaw with a Burmese family. Dinshaw was already an old man and like the Parsis of old, held the liquor licence in the town. By the time the story comes to this point, the man was dead and so Eruch and Banu were the only Parsis. The rest of the population was divided between the Karens and the Burmese. When ships from Bombay anchored in Bassein, if the skipper of a Scindia vessel happened to be a Parsi, the week would be joyful. The visitor would be entertained lavishly in exchange for all the news of home and the Parsis in particular.

The area around Bassein was cultivated to yield rice, the back-bone of the port's business. Sea-going vessels would dock alongside the half a dozen rice mills on the Bassein river banks. As Bassein expanded, timber was added to the growing export of rice. The town had one main street, less than a mile long, and a row of tin-roofed wooden houses on either side. The ubiquitous rickshaw plied the roads, pulled by Telugu-speaking Indians. In the early days, most people would be indoors by sunset.

Eruch and Banu had a lot of animals—a monkey, a deer, dogs, cows, goats and horses. Eruch rode a handsome black stallion. Banu drove a gig, a one-horse two-wheeled spring carriage. I remember a ride in it with her. The road to the railway station was straight and narrow, lined with shady trees and two little streams running along either side. Beyond were the green paddy fields. Halfway down this road, a loud noise rent the air and the horse bolted. Why the gig did not smash into a tree, I do not know. All my terrified eyes could see was Banu straining at the reins, half crouched, calling out to the horse, coaxing, scolding. Then with a whoosh, we flashed between two trees and landed in the stream. The next thing I knew, I was being pulled out by Banu, dripping wet from the stream. She loomed so large, rising from the water, as if she was some strange goddess. I must have been quite small, for I remember hanging in mid-air, the water trickling off me into the stream.

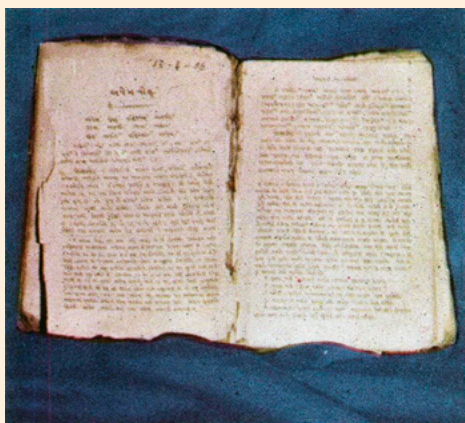
The horse was soothed and with the help of some men, the carriage was put back on to the road. We drove home soaking wet but in state. That was typical of Banu. From that day onwards, for me, no one else was so great or so brave as her.



Eruch never seemed to quarrel with anybody, but one day a serious altercation took place in front of the shop. Eruch spoke softly, trying to reconcile a stout, beefy man, but the man started hurling abuses. It seemed an endless quarrel, until a flaming faggot suddenly appeared from nowhere and was pushed on to the face of the beefy man. Within seconds he dashed off at a speed, surprising for a fat man. Maybe the parting jab of the faggot in his back helped, as also the parting words, 'Mooh Marai'. It was the irrepressible Banu who had streaked out from the kitchen with a lighted piece of firewood. In trouble, one could always depend on her.

Another incident which illustrates Banu's courage was the time when she along with the Women's Council of Bassein, was involved in the crusade against men who spat pan juice on walls and answered nature's call in public by-ways. In a neighbouring house lived a very wealthy Bengali. He was a short, fat, dark man with a bushy, walrus moustache and oily hair, parted in the middle. He was a Justice of Peace, Municipal Councillor and one of the most important men in the town. Yet, often eased himself in public. Eruch was repeatedly goaded into telling the man about it but to no avail. Finally, Banu took the law into her own hands. She took a cane she used for her children and caned the Bengali Justice of Peace as he was crouched in the act. For the next three months, the entire town of Bassein was thrown into an uproar, but that particular nuisance stopped. I do not know if the Women's Council presented Banu with a medal, but I am sure they must have cheered her to the last woman.

In spite of the fact that Eruch prayed more often than Banu, it was she who taught the word of God and the daily prayers to her children. It was she who made known to them His name and His might, His love and His justice, and with her loving hands, lit the lamp of faith within their hearts. She told them about the kings and the heroes, great Rustam, Suhrab and the white-haired one, Zal. But all this was possible only at night when the shop was closed and the children secured within the four walls of the bedroom,



The Avesta 13th April 1906

On his part, Eruch was fast acquiring a reputation as a champion of the weak and the down-trodden. All sorts of people would go to his shop—the troubled and the oppressed, the cheat and the glib-tongued as well. He would have been fair game for all but for his wife's vigilance. She sorted the undesirables from the genuinely needy and fought many a battle on his behalf.

Eruch had acquired an Avesta in Gujarati before his marriage and prayed from this book five times a day—once on getting up, then before lunch and after his bath, before he went to bed and again twice in between. This was a mystery to me. Here was a man who ran away from home at 17, lived thousands of miles away from a Parsi environment. He did not seem a religious man and had proved to be rebellious and independent. Yet he voluntarily prayed as a Zarthosti

will. Perhaps, initially in his loneliness, he prayed for help, later, in thanks giving for the bounty he had received and finally, from conviction.

Eruch had now become a very respected and loved citizen of Bassein. People called him the Singer Saab and many probably did not know him by his real name. But almost everyone knew Singer Saab was the thin, tall Parsi with the black coat, the fez-like black hat and white trousers. (It seems he brought new clothes once in a decade but the mode of attire and colour never changed).

By now Bassein had expanded and become a flourishing port. The T-model Ford that Eruch now sold was a sign of this growth; but money brought in its wake brawls, fights and growing troubles amongst the Indians and the Burmese. The victims normally were the rickshawpullers. People took rickshaw rides but did not pay for them and time and again picked quarrels with the puller and beat him up. It always seemed to end with the police arresting both the miscreant and the puller. For the rickshaw-puller to be knifed was a matter of no consequence. Somehow, these fights always seemed to happen at night. A wailing coolie or his distressed wife would come knocking at the door and Eruch would rush out of the house struggling into his black coat as he vanished into the dark, his wife and family forgotten.

In time, other down-trodden Indians made their way to his door. One never saw what he did nor did he talk about it. One night a call came from just behind the house from the stable. It was late, so I went to call him home. I heard weeping in a hut. I softly pushed open the tin door; a small wick lamp gave a dull glow. Someone lay heaped on the floor. Eruch was holding his hand, his face glistened and the stubble on his chin bristled in the red glow. He was leaning close to the man and muttering something. I waited awhile, then heard two words *Ashem Vohu*. I walked back home quietly.

Eruch was a very private person, but to those in trouble he always lent a helping hand; though to me he seemed soft and weak. He would go to the hospital, race to the police station or appear in court on behalf of a coolie. I remember one such appearance which concerned a rickshawpuller. The Indian needed someone who knew him to defend him, as he had been framed with the help of a Burmese police constable. There was no one to aid the man and naturally when the man's wife came weeping to him, Eruch rushed to the court. The case was in progress and at the opportune moment, Eruch approached the Magistrate and spoke on behalf of the coolie whom he knew personally. The Magistrate then politely queried the veracity of his statement. The normally quiet and soft-spoken Eruch stiffened his back, grew erect and he seemed to grow in stature; with his eyes flashing, in a quiet but fierce voice said, "Your Honour, I am a Zarthosti. We do not lie." By now Eruch was a reasonably well-placed trader. He paid his taxes and enjoyed a certain prominence in the town but it did not strike him to refer to his position or his money. He could only think

of himself as a Zarhosti and for him this, overrode all other considerations. The coolie was set free.

Another incident comes to mind. One Sunday afternoon at about 4.00 p.m. Mr. Latimour, the Income-tax Officer had come down to the main street with his wife. Having time on his hands, he dropped by and began chatting with Eruch across the counter. Noticing some old tennis racquets he said, "Those tennis racquets look old. I have seen them before. You should write them off. This will help you show a smaller profit. This year you have shown in fact, a higher profit." Eruch replied, "No Sir, I will sell those racquets this year and be sure, I will not lose on them. My figures are absolutely correct." Mr. Latimour was an Englishman and a fine gentleman. He only wanted to help a man whom he considered hardworking and honest. He failed to convince Eruch. As he was leaving, Mr. Latimour put his hand on my shoulder and thumbing backwards with the other, he smilingly said, "That's a religious man taken to business" and added jokingly, "And so he is religiously honest."

One of the most exciting occasions in Bassein was when the elections took place for the Municipal Corporation. Earlier, I had mentioned a family of Jews. There were three brothers. The eldest was Johnny Raphael, the second was Judah and the youngest was Jacob. They were fairly well educated and were amongst the first to come to Bassein. They had a General Merchants & Provision Stores along with a liquor licence. Before long, Johnny became a Corporator at the Municipality, later its President and continued in the office for as long as I can remember. Judah was the pack-horse, the man who carried all the work burden and managed the shop. Jacob was the brains in the family and the fountain-head of all the money spinning ideas and their execution. He manipulated town affairs as to be in control of them. They had an aerated water and ice factory, cinemas and an Electric Supply Company besides the above.

By 1935, the Burmese were becoming aware of their rights as the sons of the soil. For the last decade or more, Johnny had been the President and for the first time now a Burmese intended to stand in opposition to him. The situation was serious. With elections round the corner, the three brothers would visit Eruch frequently, for they knew the esteem in which the citizens of the town held him. Eruch would always side with them and persuade the people to vote for the Jew. His decision to help Johnny Raphael was based on the simple fact that he believed him to be the most capable man for the job. With the amount of goodwill that the citizens of the town had for him, he could have won the post himself. He did not choose to do so, for the simple reason that he believed Johnny Raphael could do a better job than himself. Because he believed he was doing right, he talked to the people—the Chinese, the Muslims, the Hindus and above all the Burmese. With each group, he had only one simple refrain— Johnny Raphael was the best man for the job and the people of Bassein would benefit by his election.

Eruch used very simple, straight-forward words and spoke from his heart. The people listened willingly and with respect. They saw before them a man rather shabbily dressed in a black coat and hat. The cuffs were frayed and the trousers crumpled. But when he began to speak, only his eyes, voice and personality existed for them. They silently heard him out. He asked for no promises nor did they give him any. The next day, the people did honour to this simple man by giving Johnny Raphael one of his greatest victories. When the results were declared, a joyous meeting was held at the Raphael house; the only man absent, was the main architect of the victory. He was at home unconcerned, once the job was done. Jacob, the wisest of the three brothers, came in his car for Eruch. He spent considerable time trying to induce him to come to dinner, but to no avail. As I saw him to the car, and closed the door behind him, he patted my hand and said with great feeling, "such men are rare". While her husband helped the town people, Banu always thought of her family in India. She would save a part of her household allowance and her income from various investments. Every month, money-orders would go to needy relatives in Poona or Satara. She continued to do this all her life.

Once every three years Eruch, Banu and the children would vacation in Satara for a few months with Eruch's mother, his father having died sometime ago. The rift between mother and son had been temporary for their mutual love and respect was evident till the end.

In spite of his many preoccupations, Eruch was always very fair with Banu and allowed her a great deal of independence. In fact, as the children grew up it was her hand that guided the business. Her department had been started with money he had given her, but he never interfered or questioned her as to what she did with it. She kept her sales proceeds to herself and deposited the same with a neighbouring Gujarati jewellery shop. This deposit earned her interest and also gave her the freedom to use her money for her business as she desired. In time, the Gujarati owner, getting on in years and wanting to return to India, made a proposition to Eruch. He offered to hand over ownership of the shop in lieu of Banu's deposit. He would retire and the husband and wife could run the shop. So the money he had given to Banu multiplied many times over and came back to him in the form of a very profitable shop. At no time Banu interfered in the negotiations and was most happy with the outcome. They now owned two ventures.

In 1933 I was 17 and joined Eruch as a sales assistant at Rs. 50/- a month. Both businesses were doing well, though the new one was far more profitable than the General Stores. Improving the profitability of the General Stores proved difficult as Eruch had rigid ideas about his business and most new suggestions ended in an argument. One of them became quite an issue. We bought and sold seasonal goods, and the percentage of profit on them had been fixed. Therefore I decided that if we bought the same material a little off-season at a lower price, stored it for a while and sold it during the season, we

could get a higher profit without raising the normal price. So the goods were ordered. The letter and the order were withheld and Eruch called for an explanation. When I explained, I was aghast to see Eruch shaking with anger. This was one of the few times I have seen him angry. He tore up the order and told me I was to order goods as and when they were needed and sell them at the fixed profit. He refused to countenance my action and told me not to let it happen again. I could not see his point of view and for days this was a bone of contention.

Maybe, I understand him better now. In those days, hoarding, blackmarketeering and profiteering were non-existent and such thoughts did not even occur to me. But today, when I look back, I know what Eruch was driving at. He was pointing out to me the difference between profit and profiteering. It was as simple as that. Further, shortages could never occur if one bought as one needed, sold as required and took one’s fixed profit. I am sure Eruch did not know the science of it, but I am confident he understood the sense of it. Perhaps it was his inbred Zoroastrian faith which made him think and act in this way. Such issues slowly drove us apart. Further, Bassein was a ditch water and I felt great things could be achieved only in a big city like Rangoon. I was aching to break the shackles that bound me to him. Eventually, Banu wrought the miracle painlessly and I got what I believed, was my freedom.

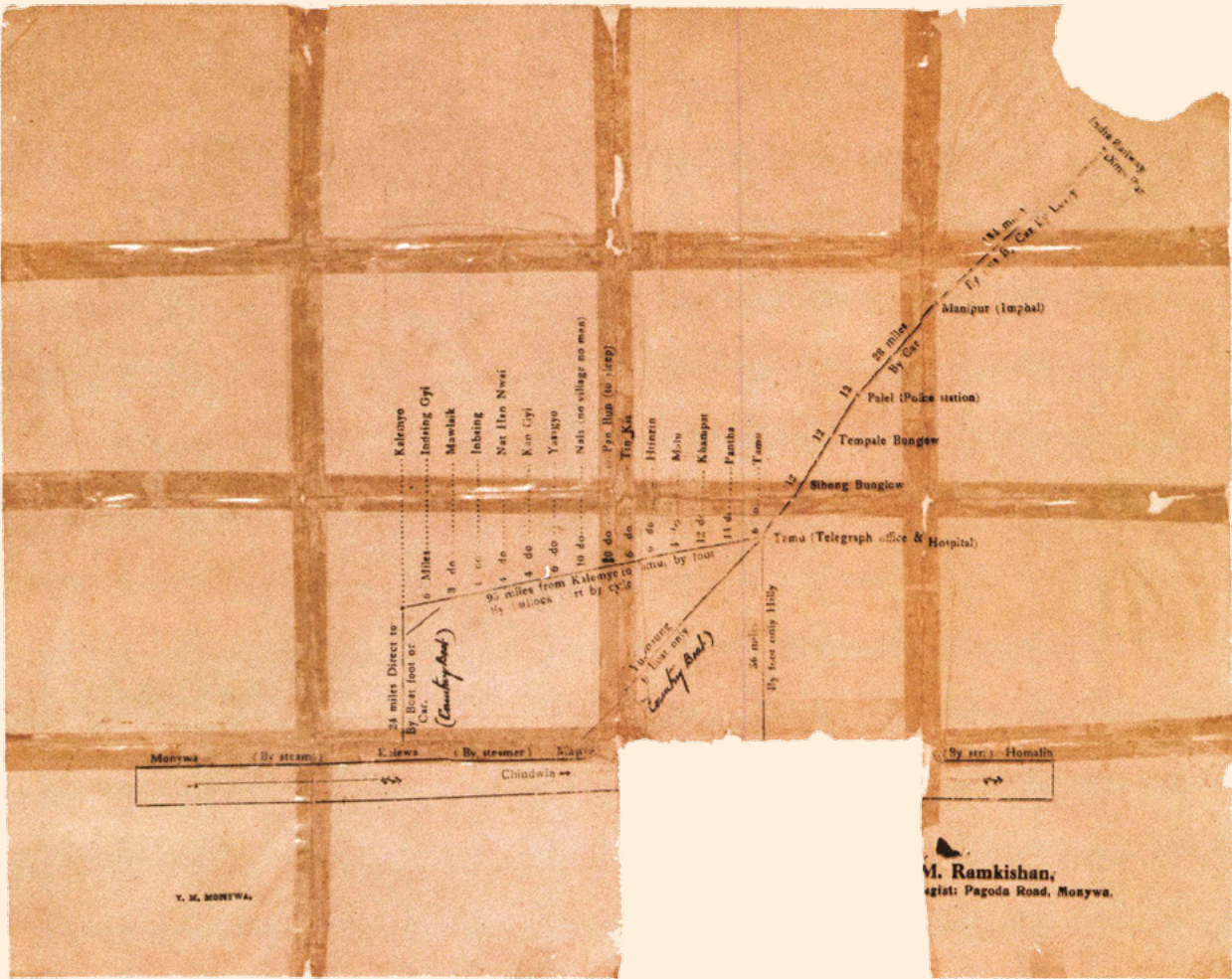
The great Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran has written a beautiful poem on the differences between the two generations. How appropriate and sweet it sounds to the youthful ear. Listen to him:

*“Your children are not your children,
They are the sons and daughters of life’s longing for itself.
They come through you, but not from you.
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.*

*You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their body but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow.
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.*

*You may strive to be like them,
But seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward,
Nor tarries with yesterday.”*

Yet, how cruel will it sound to that same youth when he becomes the father. Possibly, Gibran wrote this as a son.



The Road Map to India

On the mountainous East India border, close to the Chocolate Staircase (site of historic World War II battles) and across the broad expanse of the Tamu river, runs this path. Where the lost and the bewildered, the blind and the lame, the desperate and the calm, all walked knowing not where. In this great exodus of men, women and children walked Eruch and Banu with their family.

On 7th December 1941, the Japanese made their first surprise attack on the Allies and rained bombs on Rangoon. Even though the attack was on Rangoon, it destroyed Eruch and Banu’s home and their lives in Bassein. Like thousands of other Indians they trekked back to India over the mountains of eastern India. They returned to their home-town Satara where Banu, died a short while later. Their life’s endeavour was in shambles. While it was enough to break one’s heart, it could never have broken her spirit. In Burma she had freedom and independence. When she came back to the home of her in-laws, she still had freedom but it was the loss of her independence that killed her.

Her memory I have always cherished. She was full of life, dynamism, courage and held a fierce loyalty for those she loved. She possessed an indefinable quality that drew people to her. She was a pioneer in the true sense of the word; always in the forefront of all the things she undertook. Her life was a clear message to those around her that only the bold can lead. A number of years later, Eruch passed away. Since Banu’s death, he was a man without direction and life held no meaning

**only the bold
... lead**

for him. He was gentle and kind but more than that, he possessed a rare and precious quality that shone in him with a radiance that, if it had not been so unconscious and so humble, would have been to the common run of men hardly bearable—that quality was goodness, plain, simple goodness. He never cared to imprint his personality on others. As he lived, so he passed away, out of memory's reach.

The story needs to be retraced a little. When the bombing of Rangoon took place, Eruch and Banu with full confidence in the invincibility of the British moved to Kalaw, a hill station in the Shan States in central Burma. But within a few weeks it was apparent that this myth was soon to be exploded. Hence a trip back to Rangoon and then to Bassein became necessary.

Passing through Rangoon, I found the Parsi community agog with excitement. A hero had been born amidst them. The British army was falling back from the Tennesriam Coast and a heroic rearguard action had been fought on the banks of the Sittang river which divides the Tennesriam Peninsula from the rest of Burma. During this action, a young Parsi officer had distinguished himself, beyond the call of duty and now lay unconscious in the hospital of Rangoon with a belly full of Japanese lead. To me, this news only stressed the need for haste and immediate departure for Bassein or else the frail rail link to the north would be cut and the mission would have been aborted.

In Bassein, the shop employees were anxious for word from Eruch as they did not know what to do. Of course, the indefatigable Jacob was always there to help keep them calm, but even he was greatly relieved to see a messenger from Eruch. The accounts were checked and the settlement for each clerk and manager was completed. There was tension and excitement even in this little town of Bassein. To conceal signs of a hasty departure, the Gujarati clerks were made to dig deep trenches at the rear of the shops. This gave the people around a feeling of permanence and in the nights the tired clerks dropped dead asleep. At that time, the second phase of the work was completed which was packing of battered leather suit-cases with the contents of the safes. Here prudence had to be a guide between “enough” and “more”. One alternative offered the promise of reaching one's destination safe and sound, the other had a possibility of being a floating corpse in one of the creeks of the Irrawaddy. These were perilous times and many had already paid dearly for their carelessness. Fortunately, destiny was watchful and prudence was not tested. The days went by till D-day. The day was not revealed and the clerks lay secure in the thought that I could not return until I disposed off the stock in the safes.

The Bassein-Rangoon launch left at 3.30 p.m. Jacob knew all the secrets, always watching anxiously, never interfering. The slow nod of his head, the relaxed look in his eyes were the only signs to indicate that it was safe to go on. At 3.17 p.m. one day he drove up in his car,

the suit-cases already with him and stopped before the general stores with the engine gently ticking over. I walked over from the jewellery shop, called the clerks and cycle mechanics and told some of them to go up to the bedroom and others to go to the rear of the shop with instructions to throw open all doors and windows. Jacob sat on in the car with his head cocked to one side to be able to watch the proceedings, for this was unplanned. There were no real instructions from Eruch. All he had said was to “go and settle matters”. I walked to his empty cashbox and unlocked it, pushed in some currency notes and pulling out the key, left it unlocked. By then the men had returned from their tasks breathless.

I had Zarathushtra's photograph removed and put in the car. Entering it, I sat next to Jacob, turned to the Manager and said “At 3.30 p.m. when you hear the launch blow the departure siren, you are to walk away from the shop and leave it to the people of the town.” Even as I finished speaking, Jacob had put the car into motion, leaving the man speechless. The poor man could have died of shock. A few days ago, I had dropped in on them like a bolt from the blues. Now unannounced I was leaving, seemingly empty-handed. Why had I come at all?

There was hardly any time at the jetty for long good-byes. The launch was ready to leave and I just about managed to dump the suit-cases on the deck. I turned around, clasped Jacob's hand and jumped back on to the deck, keys jingling in my pocket. Drawing them out, I threw the safe keys to Jacob as the launch began to pull away from the jetty and called softly, “empty”. He grinned broadly and pocketed the keys.

There he stood, thin, slight, his trousers held loosely with shoulder braces. His coat a shapeless heap around him. His face creased, a slight smile on his lips, his eyes deepset, intelligent, his brown hair sprinkled with silver, soft on his head parted to one side, fluttering slightly in the breeze. He waved a few times with his right hand and stood motionless waiting for the launch to pick up speed. The deep blowing of the siren of the launch did not awaken me as I looked on at Jacob and kept waving to him. He seemed to be saying something, I could not catch the words clearly.

The words seemed to flit away. Straining hard, I figured he was saying “I shall speak to Eruch about you.” However, they never met again. He stopped speaking, a smile on his face, his eyes soft and kind with the wisdom and the patience behind it of the Jewish race. That moment I felt a deep respect and an affection for the Jews. In retrospect, it is pleasing to think of the deep friendship between the family of a Jew and one of the Zoroastrian race. Throughout a lifetime, the family of Eruch and Banu had the free use of the Raphael's electricity, soft drinks, ice and the cinema. At no time did they pay for any of these things. It was said that the original scheme for the generator and the



Zarathushtra's Portrait

cinemas was conceived by Eruch and executed by Jacob. Be that as it may, it is pleasant to think that a descendant of the Jews from the city of Babylon was returning a measure of goodwill to a descendant of the race of Cyrus.

Jacob, the jetty, the town all seemed to be pulling away, back into the distance; and shrinking. For once, I now felt all the weight of my 24 years on my shoulders and the grief of putting an end to the endeavours of a lifetime of two gentle, decent folks, pressed hard on me. The weight bowed my head and leaning against the railing of the launch, allowed grief to envelope me.

No reason can be furnished for leaving the shop open. It was an instinct and a feeling that Eruch would like it that way. Maybe, it is the inborn desire in the Zoroastrian to give back to the people, a part of what is earned through them. The Indians, who finally evacuated Bassein, locked and boarded up their shops and godowns; as very few buyers could be found amongst the Burmese. But all this was to no avail, for a day dawned when the people with gay abandon broke open the doors, windows, barricades, cupboards and even broke open safes and looted every single item. There was broken glass and destruction everywhere in town. In one place alone “the shop without doors and salesmen” it did not happen. People had walked in and departed joyfully with gramophones on their heads, others with beads, laces, anything that took their fancy. It was like a huge Christmas party without a father Christmas to give away gifts. Everything was there for the taking. By nightfall, the day I left, the place was empty and bare, but nothing was destroyed, not a door, not a glass, not a window. The people had come joyfully and left without anger. Maybe this in a way also illustrates why, inspite of the great wealth of the Parsis, there was never any animosity against them.

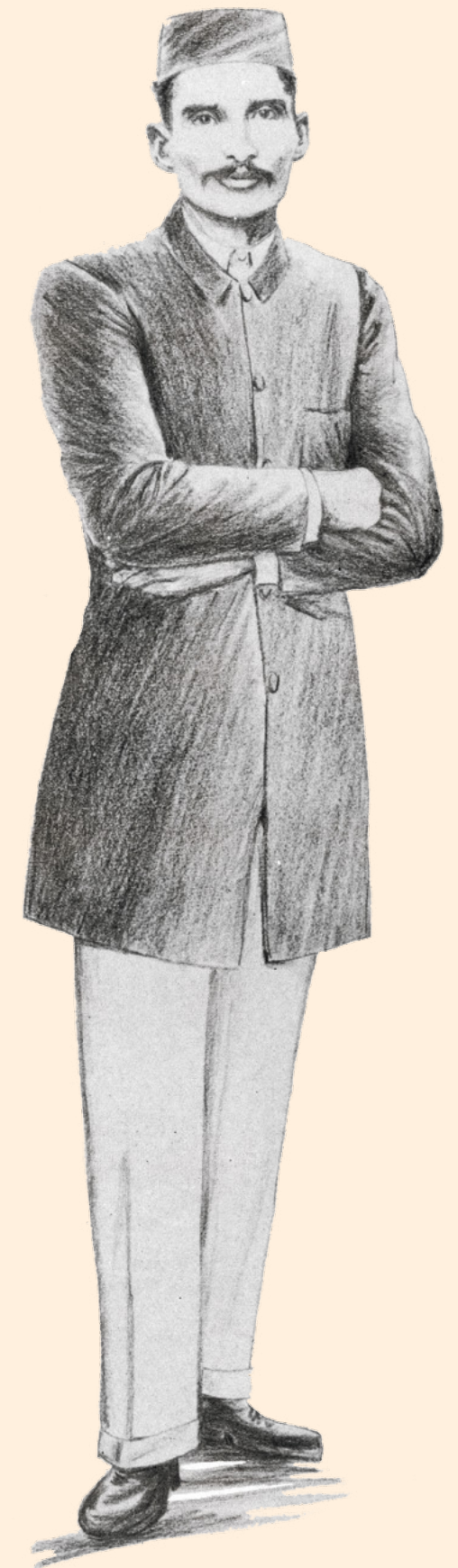
In Rangoon, the Parsi community was like a clutch of excited black crows on roof tops, talking about the Parsi army officer, Sam Maneckshaw who was on the way to recovery and it was said that the first thing he had asked for, was for some Sudrehs. I gave no thought to this talk and made tracks for the north as fast as the train could take me. Maybe if I had known he was going to be a Field Marshal, even in my haste, I might have sent him one, but then he was only a Major and I could not look into the future.

I was born in Burma and lived my life mostly away from home in a Jesuit boarding school. I had more knowledge of Christianity and even something of Buddhism and was a Zoroastrian only in name. Of course, I knew my daily prayers and something about my God Ahuramazda, His Prophet, Spitama Zarathushtra and a few of the tenets of the religion. However, because of Banu, I had somehow developed a great faith in our religion. Finally, from 17 to 24 years, I had full exposure to Eruch. But because of our repeated conflicts, I was biased and my eyes clouded to his true worth.

I had by now struck out on my own in new surroundings, but Banu was always an inspiration. The memory of her drive pushed me on and on in my life and my business expanded and I found myself dealing with foreigners and contracts of magnitude. One day after what I thought was a hard-nosed meeting with a Dutchman, his Bengali Manager on our way out remarked on the use of a peculiar expression by his boss. With reference to our discussion, the boss had said that he was dealing with “a clergyman turned businessman.” The remark irritated me and later that night I remembered my old friend, Mr. Latimour and his description of Eruch, “A religious man turned to business” I slept that night disturbed but forgot all about it the next day.

As the years went by, I realised that I had assimilated and used many of Eruch’s ideas that I had at one time considered weakness on his part. Slowly his philosophy and thinking seemed to permeate my being. One day in a moment of leisure, my thoughts went back to my early life with Eruch and then I realised what a fine self-sacrificing and humble man he had been and whenever I thought of Banu, he would come smiling into my thoughts. Before long, it seemed as if the personalities of Eruch and Banu had merged and they became one in the third entity they had created—their son. To this extent, Gibran is wrong. The child of a Zarthosti, if he has lived with his parents will always revert to the thoughts and manner of living of a Zarthosti—he will never deviate from it.

There is not much left to say, but there are so many things which require careful thought. How did a young boy of 17 develop all the true characteristics of a Zarthosti ? A boy, whose actions revealed him to be independent, wild and uncontrollable. How did he think in terms of living by the Zoroastrian prayer? To help the weak and the lowly is the greatest expression of the Zoroastrian creed. He did not care for ownership of wealth. He did make money, but understood that it was meant to be used for the happiness of those around him. To him, to lie or break his word was a great evil. How did this teaching sear his soul ? How did he learn that the highest virtue is virtue for the sake of virtue for he never spoke about the good that he had done. He never did anything good for fear or for favour. He did it only because he thought it right. He even shared the benefits of the Zoroastrian extreme unction (Ashem Vohu) with a dying Hindu. All he knew was that a soul was in distress and felt it would ease its passage to the next world. How could a young man in the wilderness without the example of another Zoroastrian family feel this way? How? He never cared about himself and was not interested in leading. Yet, leadership came unasked. If 50,000 people in a town, gave him their respect and love and would listen to his words, does that not imply leadership in the highest sense? How can it be that a Burmese will listen to an Indian to vote against a Burmese? It was incredible, but it happened. He was just a simple Zarthosti, a small town trader, but he certainly commanded the love and respect of those around him.



The thin tall Parsi . . .

There is only one answer. About 5000 years ago, a “Great Soul” called Spitama Zarathushtra expounded a great religion which was so sublime and simple that when any man exposed himself to the light of this great Master, it entered his very soul and ennobled him. Further, it affects any man who is in contact with a Zarhosti. Hence the message of Yenghe Hatam, the third great prayer Zarathushtra handed down to us. Referring to a righteous man, he said:

*“Each one of these, who have been and who are,
With reverence will / recall by name
And strive to emulate his every holy deed.”*

This means that Eruch from the age of reason till 17, had been exposed to the actions, examples and manner of living of his father, who also was a Zarhosti and this can be the only reason for the effect on him in later life.

More than half a century ago, a Zarhosti was called “religiously honest” and “such men are rare”. Yet, again in recent times, I have heard hardheaded businessmen refer to a Zarhosti and say, “They do not make them any more” or “In this day and age this man is unbelievable”. Such things will be said about Zarhostis a 100 years from now or even a 1000 or 10,000 years from now. The creed of Zarathushtra is timeless and will go on inspiring men and ennobling them, so that the people the world over will refer to a Zarhosti as “The salt of the earth.”

You may ask what is Mazda Yasna? It is the religion of the Great God Ahuramazda. His teachings and concepts have been brought to us by His Prophet Spitama Zarathushtra and in a simple way, I have tried to portray His truths in the preceding pages.

You may now ask what then is Yazata Yasna ? I would like to quote from the writings of a Hindu Sanskrit scholar, Jatindra Mohan Chatterji, who has written a number of books namely the *“Message of the Gatha, Atharvan Zarathushtra—the foremost Prophet* and the last, the Gospel of Zarathushtra.” All these books have been sponsored by the Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta. He writes:

“Sufism is the soul of Islam and as Sufism is only the other name for the Gathic Chishti, it is hoped that Mazda Yasna would be appreciated by thoughtful Musalmans. Similarly Islam also would be appreciated by thoughtful Parsis, for it keeps prominent before the eyes the ideals of Monotheism, Aniconism, Caste-equality and Race-equality and prevents Mazda Yasna from degenerating into Yazata Yasna. In their common love for the Masnavi, the Parsi and the Muslim may grasp each other’s hand.

“I should not be misunderstood as casting a reflection on the worth of Yazata Yasna. In its principles Yazata Yasna is very much akin to Deva Yasna (Hinduism); and it is sheer foolishness to think that a

system which is supported by philosophers of the stature of Ramanuja and Shankara, has no worth. Certainly Deva Yasna (and along with it Yazata Yasna) is as worthy as any other religion. No one can say that a system which has produced a scripture like the *Bhagavat Gita* deserves to be condemned. All that I mean to say is that Yazata Yasna is a deviation from the principles of Mazda Yasna, a deviation from the principles introduced by Atharvan Zarathushtra. It is practically a reversion to Deva Yasna which Zamad-Agni Zarathushtra sought to reform. The underlying principles of Yazata Yasna, however, are also worthy of respect. Only from the standpoint of national solidarity, and unity of mankind, its position is a bit weaker.

“Regarding the adverse influence of Yazata-Yasna on the national life (i.e. against the solidarity of the nation) we may cite the example of the Sassanians. The Achaemenians mostly adhered to Mazda-Yasna, while the Sassanians mostly adhered to Yazata Yasna. The Sassanians could not compete with Islam, which had incorporated all the basic principles of Mazda Yasna. A large section of my Parsi friends are inclined towards Yazata Yasna. In order that ill-feeling may not grow between the two sections (those who discountenance and those who countenance Yazata Yasna) it is necessary to repeat that Yazata Yasna also rests on sound philosophy. But it does not give that amount of help to the Nation, in its struggle against an organised enemy, as Mazda Yasna does.

“I have said that Yazata Yasna is a reversion to Deva Yasna. The point will be clear if we compare some of the salient features of Deva Yasna and Yazata Yasna. Deva Yasna lends support to polytheism and Yazata Yasna adds Mithra with Mazda. Deva Yasna brings into use the Icon, and Yazata Yasna sets up the statue of Anahita. Deva Yasna upholds the caste system, and Yazata Yasna would not mind drawing a line of distinction between the Indian Zoroastrian and the Iranian Zoroastrian. For maintaining the purity of the blood, Deva Yasna does not support conversion of foreigners. Yazata Yasna is in total agreement with Deva Yasna in this matter.”

*“Rituals and ceremonies accumulate
with Time and are for the needs of the
time but righteousness is religion
and lives through the ages. “*

MAY THE SPIRIT OF MAZDA BE WITH YOU ALWAYS

Dispersal again

In the 200 short, swift years, the Parsis had amassed fabulous fortunes and had carved out roles of leadership in almost all walks of life to become henceforth- the foremost people in India in the educational, industrial and social fields. Invigorated by a great religion, they were in the vanguard of progress, made fortunes comparable to Croesus of old and with splendid munificence gave away equally vast fortunes. Each great family transferred back to the country and the people, if not all their gains, a great part of it in the form of hospitals, scientific institutions, residential colonies, schools, scholarships and almost every conceivable form of charity. The Parsis possessed a humble and charitable disposition, unique to their community. Possibly, these were the factors which dissolved the animosity of the other communities. From 1825, for almost a century, the debate on the western exposition of the Zoroastrian religion was great and the awareness of the religion deep. Books were written by Zoroastrian scholars from the East and West and the *Zend-Avesta*, as we possess them, were translated into English and European languages and much of it was now understood by the Parsis themselves.

The *Gathas* were a new revelation which fired the imagination of the people. A great enthusiasm and expectancy were built up. As time went by, however, a paradox was noticed, which still exists. In the firetemples, the priests were concerned only with the *Vendidad*, *Bundahishn* and *Sad Dar*, *Jamaspi* and *Arda Viraf Namah* which from Sassanian times still held sway, while in the drawing-rooms of the Parsis and scholarly books, one learnt the Gathic principles. It now seemed that things had come to a standstill and nothing else seemed to happen. Once again there was confusion in the minds of the people, as it began to dawn on them that one set of sacred literature did violence to the other. Where one preached a free-will, and choice was a cardinal doctrine, the other commanded. Where one advocated tolerance, the other sanctioned force. In one, most things were abstract, in the other concrete and material. In one, there was hardly any ritual or ceremonies, in the other, rituals and ceremonies were in abundance and very clearly laid out.

By 1915, dissent raised its head. Dastur Dhalla in his book, *Zoroastrian Theology* writes: "The first outcome of the critical study of the Avestan literature, was the discovery made by the Western scholars that the grammar style and internal evidence of the extant Avestan texts show that they were not composed at a single period by one person, but that they were the products of many persons who worked at various times. Scholars such as these undertook to determine the approximate dates of the component parts of the *Avesta*. The *Gathas* were shown to be the oldest in time of composition, and the authorship of a considerable portion, if not all, of these hymns was ascribed to Zoroaster himself. The prophet's work, it was said, was continued by his immediate disciples, and must have extended over a very long period after him, even though the immediate impression made by Zoroaster himself maybe acknowledged to have become faint in succeeding generations. The

religion of the Younger Avesta had departed in certain respects from the religion of the *Gathas*, and the subsequent compositions showed signs of degeneration both in substance and style. The simple and abstract spirit of the *Gathas* was blurred, if not lost and the development of the later texts tended to become more complex and concrete. We breathe a different atmosphere, they declared, when we pass from the Gathic to the later Avestan field.

"Nature-worship, which Zoroaster strove to supplant by a higher type of ethical religion, was shown to have been reinstated in these later texts. The Haoma cult, against which Zoroaster had inveighed, had been again incorporated into Zoroastrian ritual to conciliate the prejudices of the Magi. The masses could not be weaned from the false beliefs that loomed large in their eyes, and thus, the scholars maintained, many practices abolished by Zoroaster were later resuscitated by the clergy. Startling indeed were these new ideas that philological researches brought to the Parsis, who had been accustomed to attribute indiscriminately all Avestan compositions to Zoroaster himself and who never approached their own sacred books with a historical perspective.

"This critical estimate of their scriptures by the Iranian scholars of the West greatly influenced the young Parsi scholars in India. They now hailed the *Gathas* as providing a self-sufficient religious system in themselves. They claimed to have discovered the only true mirror in which the genuine teachings of Zoroaster were reflected. The later Avestan texts were declared to observances, they asserted, had supplanted the buoyant simplicity of the Gathic teachings, and simply represented a decline from the pure teachings of Zoroaster. The names of the Ameshaspands in the *Gathas* were considered to be merely descriptive of the attributes of Ormazd. These attributes, they insisted, had crystallised into concrete beings, thus converting the monotheistic religion of Zoroaster into a veritable system of polytheism. Tradition, they urged, attributed to Zoroaster doctrines that he never preached. They advocated a return to the original purity of the faith by stripping off the accretions that had gathered round the pure canon of the prophet, thus removing the haze of ignorance and bigotry that had clouded the light of their excellent religion.

"All this was highly sacrilegious to orthodox ears. Such statements roused the strong resentment of the community and elicited vehement protests from priests and laymen alike. The new school was assailed on all sides. More sober opinion intervened to modify the sweeping assertions, and declared that while the *Gathas*, of course, should be taken as the norm, there should also be admitted into the Zoroastrian canon such parts of the later scriptures as were in accord with the Gathic spirit; but whatever could not be traced to the *Gathas* was adventitious, and therefore not deserving of acceptance. The problem at once arose as to who was going to distinguish the authoritative from the unauthoritative and a new controversy opened amid still more bitter feelings.

“The salient feature of dualism in the Iranian faith has ever been the chief point assailed by the non-Zoroastrians, both in ancient and modern times, whenever they have entered into religious disputations with the followers of the Prophet. They have laid the doctrine of two gods to the charge of Zoroastrianism. The accidentals of the controversy have varied materially in their character at different periods, but the main point of contention has ever remained the same. We have already seen how vehemently the learned prelates of the Pahlavi period strove to vindicate this characteristic feature of the Zoroastrian teachings. Far from considering it a weak point, they hailed it as the one possible solution of the problem of evil. Not so their modern descendants. The repeated attacks of the Christian missionaries, and the strong influence of the western literature, which hailed monotheism as the highest category of theology brought about an unprecedented change in this belief; and so powerful has this influence been, that we hardly ever find even at this day, any learned Parsi priest or layman marshalling arguments in vindication of the doctrine. Attempts are now generally made either to explain it away by ingenious arguments or to speak of it apologetically.

“Haug was the first to bring it to the notice of the Parsis that the leading idea of the *Gathas* was monotheism. Ahura Mazda, he declared, is the supreme godhead, who has produced the two rival principles Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu as his twin spirits. Separated as they seem, they are united in action. They are indispensable to each other in the formation and conduct of the universe. They are the creative and destroying, constructive and destructive powers of God, and are as inseparable from each other as day and night. The opposition rests with the two rival spirits, and nowhere in the *Gathas* does Angra Mainyu, the evil spirit, stand in direct opposition to Ahura Mazda. This fundamental distinction, he said is lost sight of in the later period, and we find in the *Vendidad* that the Good Spirit Spenta Mainyu is identified with Ahura Mazda himself, and the Evil Spirit Angra Mainyu stands in direct antagonism to God. The Parsi scholars who were in search for some new arguments to remove the so-called weak point of their faith, eagerly embraced this new explanation, which, they thought, saved the *Gathas* at least from the stain of dualism. If the *Vendidad* and other later works introduced it in the Zoroastrian theology, it was a decided fall, they claimed, from the original pure monotheism. The prophet himself never taught dualism, they argued, and it is unfair to ascribe that doctrine to him, for which the enlightened youth had to blush before modern criticism.”

You will notice that Dastur Dhalla raises the cry, “The problem at once arose as to who was going to distinguish the authoritative from the unauthoritative and a new controversy opened amid still more bitter feelings.” Why did the Dasturji and the other Parsi scholars not form a committee and thrash out this matter, even if it took 10 or more years? Have not the Mullahs, the Rabbis, the Pope and his Cardinals done so time and again and brought succour and comfort to their faithful by solving religious problems? There were many Zoroastrian scholars who

had undergone thorough training under world famous scientific theologians like Spiegel, Haug, Geldner, Max Muller, Jackson and others. Easily a dozen good and sincere priests and scholars could have formed a committee and the job taken on. It was indeed a tragedy for the Parsis, that it was not done. The matter drifted till disillusion and indifference set in and finally, apathy.

Each time in their long history the Zoroastrians have risen to great heights when they have lived by the spirit of Mazda. History has shown that when the pre-Zoroastrian religion creeps in, with it comes disillusion, indifference and downfall. This is a pattern which has repeated itself again and again. History tells us that from the time of Artaxerxes II (Achaemenian Dynasty) the Zoroastrian religion began to deteriorate and a sort of nature worship crept in and a paganism which was there before Zarathushtra, began to reappear. A few generations later with the quality and fibre of Zoroastrians having weakened, the Achaemenian empire was destroyed. Ardeshir Papakan revived the Zoroastrian religion and brought in the spirit of Mazda and the fortunes of the Sassanians began to improve. Then came the mounting orthodoxy and the different heresies and the mystic cults. Again we see a close reversion to a pre-Zoroastrian religion and then comes the destruction of the Sassanian empire. This time there were no empires to fall, but the tragedy in essence was no less. A community comprising less than 0.02 percent of a great country's population commanded great heights socially and industrially, a position totally out of proportion to its size and so the magnitude of its disintegration is no less. The responsibility for the failure however, now rests squarely on themselves. In the past, the people must have drifted from the soul of their religion unconsciously and in ignorance. Not so the Parsis.

Ninety-five percent of the Parsi community was literate and they knew the problem that faced them. It was apathy on their part that wrought the disaster. The unprecedented economic prosperity had helped the revival of learning. The average Parsi child of both the sexes entered the schools founded on European lines. Education on the western standard had spread rapidly. The inroads made by western ideas and culture had begun to undermine the old ideas and modify many of the beliefs sanctified by the ages. It was also the opening of a new age for the Parsis, affluence had brought idleness to its young and the need to work was no longer imperative. It was also a time when they witnessed the waning of the power of authority and the waxing of the demand for verification of the religious truth. The elders failed to notice the signs and gave no sustenance to the religious enthusiasm created by the new revelations.

The traditional creed had failed to carry intellectual conviction and the fusion required between the old and the new revelations on the *Gathas* did not take place. The final results were no different from the past. There was discontent and emptiness in the hearts of the young which led them to find solace in rich offerings to the tombs of Muslim saints

and to Hindu shrines and the plastering of the walls of their homes with pictures of different saints and other gods. Some of these Parsis called themselves “free thinkers” but they were no different from their Sassanian forefathers, who wandered the land of Iran with emptiness in their hearts and an unconscious longing for Mazda.

Once again the young are clamouring for information on their religion and an enthusiasm for their faith is mounting within them. Fifty years ago the elders ignored this sign. So, if Zoroastrianism is to live in this world as a living faith and the vitality of our religion is to be upheld, then it is the duty of every Zarhosti first to know the laws of Ashoi as taught by our Prophet and practise the same himself and then see that the young have understood our God’s law. Many problems face our community at this moment, but the first need of the hour is to keep those who are Zarhostis, truly Zoroastrians in thoughts, words and deeds. Rest assured, once God’s truth spreads to the young, then in time all things will fall into place. But first look to the young and give their religious needs sustenance.

Spitama Zarathushtra was a pragmatic man and possibly he left the matter of rituals and ceremonies to the later generations. The Gathic principles are like the trunk and roots of a tree. The later Pahlavi pronouncements are the branches and the leaves. Maybe the branches are overgrown and distorted and need trimming and those that are rotten cut off. But to do more, would be to destroy the tree. Besides, there have been original thoughts in the later scriptures which have their origin in the Gathic principles and are valuable, but a mass of rituals, ceremonies and formalism hides them. We, therefore, cannot turn our face away and say we disown this and accept that. All of it is the Holy Zoroastrian Scripture, some of it may be distasteful but they are all part of our legacy and heritage.

One last thought on the later scriptures. It is better to be aware of our weaknesses, frailties and oddities and the reason for their being in our scriptures. In the West there is deeper knowledge of our scriptures than over here. The day should not dawn when you have to blankly face disruptive criticism and cringe before it. Every religion has its greatness and its subsequent accretions and knowing both, you can face life better.

Men by nature are weak and material in their ways and as such need symbols. Each day, from the moment of waking, we think of wife, children, home, luxury, and pleasures. If we are in trouble, then only do we think of our God. Accepting these facts of life, we need symbols even if it is a little flame in our home to remind us about God. We need the fire temple as it is a reminder and symbol that through this sanctified place, we can communicate with our God and do honour unto Him. Likewise, the rituals and ceremonies. They are not religion but they are necessary for the life of the religion. You may have a beautiful body, yet, you adorn it with clothes. Therefore, we need our rituals and ceremonies as adornment for our religion and as a means to do honour unto our God.

One can also understand the reason for the dissent of the young Parsi scholars over 50 years ago and their desire to disown the later Avestan texts and accept the Gathic principles as revealed by Spitama Zarathushtra himself. For these concepts exalt choice and free will which is why they are so sublime and beautiful. One can even be forgiven if one calls it the religion of the Gods. It is a religion whose application makes man noble, bringing out the best in him and where even a weakling turns into a man of character adding height to his moral stature. It is when the weak take advantage of the voluntary nature of things and do not follow the religion, that it falls into disrepair. Hence the need for a certain amount of formalism.

A little over two decades ago, signs began to appear that the heyday of the Parsis was past. There were, even at that time, many great Parsis in different spheres of life. But on closer scrutiny it was apparent they were mostly men of the older generation and the young were few and far between. On the other hand, banks and insurance companies seemed to swell with Parsi youth. The quality and aspirations of the Parsi man had changed for the worse. About the same time the Parsi population began to diminish and as the seventies approached, the signs of decline became very clear. Slowly, palatial buildings and properties belonging to old families began to change hands and the young took to leaving their homes and their country for Europe, Canada, U.S.A., U.K., and Australia. China and the Far East did not rate that high in their estimate, as it did in the days of their forefathers. The cycle was now complete. The dispersal had begun again.

A word of advice to those of you, who have gone abroad and are struggling to know your religion. Do not begin again a series of “Revayats” with the Parsis of India. You are the hope of the Zoroastrians. Keep your minds free and unbiased. There are many fine books on our religion by Zoroastrians such as Dr. Irach J.S. Taraporewala, Ardeshir F. Khabardar, Dastur Khurshed S. Dabu, Dastur Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, Dastur Framrose A. Bode, Dr. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, Cursetji Rustamji Cama, Sorabjee Kanga and others, as also westerners like Dr. Martin Haug, Dr. Lawrence H. Mills, Dr. E. W. West, Dr. Eckehard Kulke, Professor R.C. Zaehner, Geldner and others. Get them and learn to assess the truth yourself. Know your religion and its greatness. Do not make the same mistake as the Parsis of Gujarat, of importing a mass of rituals and ceremonies only and letting it masquerade as your religion. This is not religion. You will never be able to hold your young with it.

Some day, and that day must come, there will be scholars and priests. The day will be brought by those of the future, the young here and those who have left this country—who, today, are clamouring for knowledge of their religion and are unfettered and free. By men who will have no frontiers around their mind and whose thinking will have no fences. They will be God’s men dedicated to the Will of Mazda and to the task of fusing and blending the Gathic principles with the later Pahlavi pronouncements aided by philological research and bring forth our

religion in greater clarity showing its true sublimity and beauty complete with needed rituals and ceremonies.

The handful of Iranian fugitives who came swarming on to the shores of India, 1300 years ago, had nothing with them. They symbolised the hope and the repository of all things Zoroastrian. Why then should it not be possible for the free and independent Parsi youth with greater opportunities in the world to bring about a renaissance of the true Zoroastrian faith as Spitama Zarathushtra expounded it? The Libraries and museums of Europe and England hold almost all of the extant original manuscript and material of our Holy Scripture. Books by scientific theologians are freely available. Only greater zeal and steadfast determination is required. Nothing can happen overnight. The task is great and the effort required is Herculean. But nothing is impossible if you now set yourself to it. For my part I give you a heroic “password”, seared into my soul by the irrepressible Banu. She didn’t coin the phrase —words meant little to her, it was by the manner of her living that each word was forged into my mind. Implant them in your hearts and they will galvanise your life “Only the Bold . . . Lead”.

Lest you forget, an important characteristic of a Zarthosti is his strong sense of gratitude for bounty received. When you make your future in distant lands, never fail to remember the comfort, solace and shelter given to us since the days of our arrival here, centuries ago by this great and tolerant land and its fine people. Wherever you maybe, remember this, and endeavour to repay this debt of hospitality. Forget this, and you cast a slur on your rich heritage.

A last thing to be kept in mind if you are to succeed—you will need a respected priesthood. Our priests here have been treated shabbily like dumb creatures performing some fixed rituals and ceremonies and not as interpreters of a great religion. They are what they are, because, we, the Parsis have made them so. The scholars amongst you can proceed with the investigations, but you, who are involved in the earning of your daily bread, cannot or may not be able to take up the task. But if a respected position of authority can be created for the priesthood, and they are made independent of charity for their livelihood, then you can breed a new cadre of dedicated and intelligent priests, who can devote their lives towards the continuous interpretation of our religion. The most powerful and successful religions of the world are those with a strong and independent priesthood.

Till then, there is so much to go on with, if you will it. Examine your concepts (page. 16.) these are profound and thought-provoking and so try to understand them, for it will give you comfort and solace. Then the Charter of Faith (page . 62.). There is enough there to guide you through life and to make you a whole new world to live in.

As the end of this book draws near, it is necessary to call your attention once again to one of the most beautiful facets of Zoroastrianism. Cyrus and Darius, the Achaemenians proclaimed to the world that, a Great God is Ahuramazda and made this message permanent by their inscriptions on the mountains of Behistan and elsewhere. Certainly

this expressed their fervour, but while doing so, they also expressed what they believed to be a great truth, for Ahuramazda was no petty God of an Iranian tribe only, nor did this God claim the Iranians only to be His chosen people. Ahuramazda was indeed a Great God above all these little ties and had inspired the Achaemenians to create the first Universal Empire the world had ever known. Zarathushtra’s God was without the narrow shackles of anything exclusive and small. His was the religion of the Universal man for all souls belonged to the Great God and salvation was there for all the righteous.

It is fitting to add here the words of that great Theologian Dr. Irach Taraporewala from his magnificent book, The Gathas of Zarathushtra. He said, “The Gathas rank among the ‘Bibles of Humanity’ . . . These Gathas are among the most precious possessions of humanity and they are the very fountainhead of the teaching of Zarathushtra . . . The place of Zarathushtra among the prophets is unique. He was born not merely to teach and uplift the Iranian race so many thousands of years ago, but his was the message meant for all Humanity and for all ages. For Zarathushtra was not merely the Prophet of Iran, but he was the world teacher, and his message is the eternal teaching of Truth, Love and Service. His message has a very special value for humanity today”.

Finally, it is well to remember that by virtue of your birth, you possess a precious jewel, your Zoroastrian heritage and religion. Therefore, retain your identity without fail and first maintain a Zoroastrian name for you and your children. If you have failed to do so, then give a Zoroastrian name even now. Learn to remind yourself each day that you are a Zarthosti, particularly when decisions are involved. This will create a pride within you and your family to help cherish your heritage. Slowly then build up a strong faith, not out of tradition but out of conviction for your Great God Ahuramazda and His Prophet, that “Great Soul” Spitama Zarathushtra. For on your shoulders lies the responsibility of preserving one of the most ancient and sublime religions of the world for the generations to come. Let it not be said, by those to come that you have cast away one of the most precious possessions that God in His goodness gifted to you.

*“I tell you that the children of yesteryears
are walking in the funeral of the era
that they created for themselves. . .
But the children of tomorrow
are the ones called by life,
and they follow it with steady steps and heads high,
they are the dawn of new frontiers,
no smoke will veil their eyes,
and no jingle of chains will drown out their voices.
They are few in number,
but the difference is between a grain of wheat and a stack of hay.
No one knows them but they know each other”*

Bombay, India
1st November, 1977.

The Eternal Truth

“And now we have reached the completion of our study down to the present day. We have traced the gradual development of the religion of Zarathushtra during the various periods of its history . . . Many millions have lived happily and died peacefully under the shadow of the protective wings of the faith. Zarathushtra’s immortal triad of ‘good thoughts, good words and good deeds’ has kindled religious zeal, intensified desire, ennobled thoughts, illumined the minds, and warmed the hearts of his countless followers. Throughout its history Zoroastrianism has seen its bright and dark days, accompanied by the rise and fall of the political power of its adherents. During these ages, great and mighty kings, in whom were concentrated the temporal power of Persia, have ruled over Iran. Yet they are no more. But the one personally in whom was sanctified the spiritual power, everlastingly greater than kings, has ruled over the hearts of men in all periods of the nation’s history and will ever continue to rule in the ages to come.

“Zarathushtra, the chosen of Ahura Mazda, does not belong to any single period or people, but to all ages and to all peoples. He is unchanging. His religion inspired the Iranian nation with the loftiest of ideals when Iran was at the zenith of her power. His ever optimistic teachings and the ever cheerful spirit of his sublime doctrines saved its remnants from falling into the slough of pessimism and gloom, twelve centuries ago, when the Zoroastrian community stood appalled by the national catastrophe that sounded the deathknell of their empire. With the downfall of the empire, the hope of regaining power had disappeared forever. They could never see visions of its restoration. History has recorded this one, unique and pathetic instance of a great nation of millions being reduced to a small community of a 100,000 souls all told, still true to its ancient faith.

“Everything that was nearest and dearest to them in the fatherland was gone. Zarathushtra remained their only hope, and with his religion as the only cherished heritage, the Parsi exiles sought asylum in India. Twelve centuries have dragged their weary course since they first landed on this land of hope, and began their life anew. Rulers of nations they have not become, but they have proved themselves to be the true bearers of the great name and fame of their illustrious forbearers. The pages of their national history are still thrilling with the noble deeds of the ancient Iranians, and their dutiful descendants have faithfully reflected their past national glory in the mirror of their small community. Zoroastrian virtues have made the modern Parsis great. The community has secured a pioneer place in the social, intellectual, and industrial life of the teaming millions of India. They have amassed vast fortunes and have given away equally vast sums for philanthropic purposes without distinction of caste, colour or creed. . .

“The virtue of charity has been built into the community’s fibre, and is woven into the tissues of every individual’s being. A religion that produces such results in the practical life of a community well deserves

the epithet ‘excellent’ which the Mazda-worshipping religion of Zarathushtra is given in the Confession of Faith.

“With sublime confidence Zarathushtra foretold to the Evil Spirit that his religion will ever live and his followers will do battle with the forces of evil up to the end of the world. His noblefaith has weathered the heaviest of storms and survived them; and a religion, which stood these trials in the past, will stand any trial in the future, Zoroastrianism will live by its eternal verities of the belief in the personality of Ormuzd, and abiding faith in the triad of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, the inexorable law of righteousness, the reward and retribution in the life hereafter, the progress of the world towards perfection, and the ultimate triumph of the good over evil through the coming of the Kingdom of Ormuzd with the co-operation of man.

“These are the truest and the greatest realities in life. They are valid for all times. They constitute the lasting element of Zoroastrianism. In the midst of the accretions that have gathered round it during the long period of its life, these immortal truths have remained substantially unchanged, and by them Zoroastrianism will live for all time. Dogmas and rituals are based upon the needs of the times, and as such they are subject to the natural laws of growth and decay. They have their place in the spiritual development of man. They are the accompaniments of religion, but not religion itself. Man may fall away from dogmas and from rituals, and yet he may remain religious. Righteousness rests on the individual’s piety, and not on a scrupulous observance of ceremonials, or a practice of elaborate lustrations. Let the Parsi individually, and his community collectively, abide steadfast in the path of righteousness, and they will be practising true Zoroastrianism—in the fret and fever of modern civilization, which renders man exceedingly sensitive to suffering, and lets loose on him the demons of restlessness and discontent. Zarathushtra’s religion is the best sedative for him today. So will it be in all social unrests, economic crisis, and religious upheavals of the future. Zarathushtra has been the hope of the Parsis in the past. So is he now, and so will he be forever.”

Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, Ph.D.
High Priest of the Parsis of Karachi
New York-1914

The Eternal Truth is the conclusion from Dastur Dhalla’s book Zoroastrian Theology. There is a ring of eternal truth in his words. They are as valid today as they were 63 years ago. He was an intellectual and an honourable man who tried to do his best by his lights. He was maligned by a number of people as being ‘westernised’. I reproduce his words to do honour unto him and with it, men of his stamp who are no more and just a few more who still go on. These were and are a special breed of men, intellectuals all, each an independent thinker and his own man, who took to the craft of priesthood, a task of no special esteem with the Parsis, till a point has now been reached, when we have driven most of them into the wilderness and none but the dull and the dim will enter the profession.

THE BETTER THINGS IN LIFE
ARE THE LITTLE THINGS
YOU DO FOR OTHERS

(the Forgotten Graces)

10

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THE FIVE
GATHAS
OF SPITAMA
ZARATHUSHTRA

[Excerpts](#)

Gatha Ahunavaiti

1. YASNA 28

After attaining enlightenment, he prays for divine grace for accomplishment of his mission. This prayer expressing the yearnings of the Holy Prophet is found in Yasna 28.

*“First / pray that through righteous acts true knowledge may / gain,
and Vohu-Manu’s loving wisdom too,
and thus bring solace to the soul of Earth.*

*Fain would I, Mazda-Ahura, to You reach up through Vohu-Manu.
Then, by your grace, Your boundless Xshathra too shall Armaiti
increase within our heart.*

*As long as / have will and wield the power,
/ shall teach mankind to love and strive for truth
Thy Sacred Word proclaiming may we ever convert with force
of tongues those gone astray.*

*Grant to Zarathushtra joy of inner life that he may overcome the hate of
foes.
Yearningly / pray for the loftiest abode for Vishtaspa*, Frashaoshtra*
and my men.
That blessing grant unto us.*

*Never, O Mazda-Ahura, through these Your gifts abused may we
provoke Your wrath.
/ believe no prayer devout for truth can ever remain unanswered
from Your side.
Teach me the Truth, that / may proclaim
which Powers wrought first to bring to birth our Life.”*

2. YASNA 29

Gatha Ahunavaiti starts with Yasna 28. But Yasna 29, which is dramatic in form, describes the preparations being carried out in heaven before the birth of Zarathushtra. Hence, in the natural and logical order, Yasna 29 should have come earlier (see page 23).

3. YASNA 30

Yasna 30 explains how good and evil were created and also their place in life.

*“Now will / speak of the Two Spirits Mazda did create.
Hear the highest truths / preach,
and with illumined minds weigh them with care,
before you choose which of two paths to tread,
deciding man by man, each one for each.*

“Vishtaspa was the first royal disciple of the Prophet. He was the King of Bactria (Iran). Frashaoshtra was the disciple closest to Zarathushtra. He and Jamasp, his brother, were the trusted ministers of Vishtaspa.

*The first-created were the Spirits Twain,
yet in each thought and word and deed these Two are never agreed.
One is Good (Spento-Mainyu), the other Bad (Angro-Mainyu).
LIFE did the Good make, the Other made NOT-LIFE;
and thus Creation’s purpose is achieved.*

*Dark is the mind of those that cling to False,
but brightly shines the mind that holds to Truth.
He who would clothe himself in Light of Heaven,
let him through deeds of Truth choose Mazda’s way*

*Unto him, who chooses Mazda’s way,
shall come the Lord’s own Strength,
for he hath passed the fiery test of truth.
When, on the other hand,
the wages due to others for their sins are fully paid,
then, Mazda, Thy Law Supreme shall be revealed to them.
Then shall they learn to give all Falsehood into Ashoi’s hands.*

*Learn these Laws, O men,
the laws of happiness and the laws of pain—
that Falsehood brings on age-long punishment,
that truth leads on to fuller higher life.”*

4. YASNA 31

*“Mindful of these Your Laws,
Your message / shall proclaim
to those who by the Tempter False are lured;
but it is worth hearing specially by those
whose hearts are dedicated to the Lord.*

*So to ye all, sent by Ahura,
/ am come as Teacher.
The Law Divine, that Thou hast through the inner fire disclosed,
O Mazda, explain to us in words of inspiration from Thy mouth,
to help us to convert all living men.*

*When, O Lords of Matter and of Life (Ameshaspentas) ye listen to our call,
then my love through Vohu-Manu shall strive to win
the mighty Xshathra-Strength to Serve-by which grown strong;
we vanquish all Untruth.*

*Reveal the truth Thou hast ordained through love,
that / might be uplifted and be sure that
whatever comes at Thy command is best for me.
The highest and the best shall come to him,
who, having wisdom, shall spread the Holy Word,*

*which to Perfection (Haurvatat) leads and to Eternal Life (Ameretat).
His LIGHT which streams through the Lights on high glows
as LOVE Supreme.*

*May / realise Thee as the First and also Last,
as the true Parent of ETERNAL LAW,
as Judge Supreme of every act of man,
Thou gavest to all that live the choice of paths.
Between the Shepherds true and false should mortals ever choose
as their protector a Master who is ever true to Ashoi.*

*O Mazda, never may the Wolf disguised as pious Shepherd
share Thy Holy Truth.
For us Thou didst make from first bodies with souls within that can
perceive, yet out of Thy thought didst give us power to think,
and strength to act, so that we freely choose the path we tread.*

*So each announces loudly his belief,
whether he speak with Knowledge or without.
But in the heart of each of us,
directly through his spirit, Armaiti appeals,
for she stands by to solve his doubts.*

*What silent yearnings of men
have been recorded in the Book of Life?
How do these stand when the account is closed?
What is the penalty for those
who would advance the False One's might
and seek but one fulfilment in their lives—
the separation of the Shepherd true from his trusting human flock?
The wise man who strives to serve his home,
his town, his province and his land
with all his heart shall be merged in Thee.
Let the wise ones to the wise this secret tell.*

*So let no one give heed to Teachers False,
who would hurl men down to the world of torment and of death.
Resist them with your inner spirit's sword.
Who hears the truth and lives it in his life,
soul-healing Lord of Wisdom he becomes.
He shall spread true Teaching.
The wise who follow the soul-healing Lord,
the LIGHT ETERNAL shall be their abode.
But False Ones shall for ages long reside in light obscure,
uttering words of woe.
They are condemned by their own selves,
through their own wicked deeds.*

*His blessings Mazda doth bestow
on those who soul and body loyal stand.*

*Out of full wisdom Ashoi's truth He gives;
His vital Xshathra gives us strength to serve;
His all-sustaining Vohu-Manu brings love.
The wise do glorify the law of Ashoi in their words and deeds;
such men ever side with Thee,
O Mazda, and most loyal is their help."*

5. YASNA 32

6. YASNA 33

Zarathushtra states herein that law forms the basis of all life and Ahuramazda would mete the strictest justice to all—the true man and the false, and calls for the Lord's blessing and enlightenment by a vision.

*"And who so fosters zealously all Life,
assures himself a place within the Realm of Vohu-Manu
(the Heaven of God's love).
So will / pray away all want of faith and ill-intention
that beset the path of good men.
By the strength of my prayer / shall drive away
the False Shepherds from the pastures of the world.*

*/ invoke Sraosha (Obedience to the Will of God)
the greatest Servant of the Lord,
to help me reach the final goal of Life,
achieving Life eternal, one with the Lord,
within the fold of His love.*

*/ will fulfil the guardianship of the world Thou hast
planned for me:
so, Lord, / ask of Thee a vision of Thyself and speech with Thee.
O Mazda, Ashoi and Vohu-Manu I
come unto me in Your resplendent forms
that / may proclaim your Word throughout the world.*

*Most ardently / desire to serve you.
Judge carefully my purpose whole,
which / with true devotion would pursue.
Haurvatat and Ameretat (the experience of fulness of union with God
obtaining which man becomes perfect and immortal
and desires nothing) are Thy Powers.
May / gain Light and Wisdom through Them,
and may Vohu-Manu bring down from Thy abode
the blessing of these Two ..."*

7. YASNA 34

Zarathushtra tells mankind that He brings them Eternal Life, Truth and Strength through Righteousness and Perfection.

*“On Thee alone we ever meditate,
and ponder over the words of Vohu-Manu.
May our souls accord most perfectly with Truth and may
we all live in Thy serene Domain.*

*May we find fulfilment through Thy Vohu-Manu.
We yearn to see Thine Inner Fire.
He lights the faithful clearly through life.
Boundless is Thy Power, Lord, and deeply do / yearn
to serve Thee.*

*0 Ameshaspentas, You are Beings far above us and are mighty.
Your devotee and singer shall / remain
and thus break through the fetters of my soul.*

*Each man should know of his Divine heritage.
In trouble and distress this knowledge brings freedom
to their intellect and mind.*

*Those who being stronger, always oppress weaker ones,
are sore afraid of Thy devotees.
Thy Law of Truth they defy.
Thy foes scoff at Holy Armaiti,
so high esteemed by the wise.
But to Thy foes Thy sage shall show the path of Righteousness
and speak to them of Holy Armaiti
as the root of Righteousness present in each heart.*

*When they shall learn this Truth,
all foes of Thine shall come to Thee at last.
Then both Thy Mighty Powers,
Haurvatat and Ameretat (Perfection and Immortality)
shall lead them on to Light.*

*With These, 0 Mazda, dost Thou work and win.
Thy guidance dear, 0 Mazda, give to us for keeping
Thy commands:
lead us in the Paths of Truth,
so that we realise our inner selves through Love.*

*The one path that leads to Thee, 0 Ahura,
is the path of Vohu-Manu’s Love,
pointed out by all the Saviours.
Good deeds done for their own sake lead far:
this teaching leads mankind to true wisdom*

*Souls in mortal bodies clothed shall learn by doing
deeds of Love,
They serve best our fruitful Mother-Earth and help in
Thy Holy Plan.
Whatever words and deeds are considered noblest by
Thee, 0 Lord, teach unto me.
Then shall the yearnings of my soul be fulfilled and
my life be True,
according to Thy wish.”*

GATHA USHTAVAITI

1. YASNA 43

*“Who brings to others Light, himself gets Light,
bestowed by Mazda-Ahura.
Armaiti bless us with the Light Divine,
and mould our life as Vohu-Manu directs.*

*That man shall surely reach the Highest Good (Heaven)
who unto us points out the path of Bliss that leads up
to the world of Truth.
His wisdom shall grow from day to day.*

*I know Thee, Lord, as both strong and pure.
When Thou dost grant their meed to false and true,
then in my heart Thy Flame shall brightly shine.*

*Thou wast the First when Life began.
All thoughts and words and deeds of men
shall bear fruit as laid down in Thine Eternal Law.
Thy wisdom thus ordains it.
None shall thwart fulfilment of Thy Will.
Since Good found entrance to my heart through Love,
I know Thou art Divine.*

*I will be Thy devotee for all time.
Unto Thine Inner Flame I pay my homage.
Test us that we prove our Faith.
Thy testing shall sort out the brave;
these leaders by Thee inspired shall fulfil Thy Plan.*

*When difficulties come I shall do what Thou hast taught.
I shall follow the Truth and thus gain wisdom.
I shall work in Thy name, until within my heart
Obedience (Sraosha) to Thy Law shall rise.*

*Grant us the boon that few would dare to ask—
long life of Service by Thy Xshathra led.
Xshathra brings to those He loves Thy peace and wisdom.*

*Those who obey Thy orders shall unite with all true servers
in a holy band and save mankind.
For steady inner growth quiet meditation is best.
Compromise not with evil.
Therefore, my choice has been Thy Spirit holiest and best."*

2. YASNA 44

Poetically Yasna 44 is the finest amongst the Gathas. As a seeker of Truth and as a lover of the Lord, Zarathushtra asks many questions and expresses the yearnings of his heart. The questions are unanswered: each man shall find the answers within his own heart, aided by Armaiti. This is the entire teaching of the Gathas. It is only through these answers that one attains true Enlightenment, "Ushta". See page 40

3. YASNA 45*

*"I will speak about the Spirits Twain,
coming together at creation's dawn,
quite apart from each in thought, and will and word.*

*I will teach the First Truth of your Life,
which from Ahura I have learnt.
Mazda hath ordained the Laws of Life.
Father is He of Loving Mind (Vohu-Manu)
and His Daughter Armaiti ever works for good.
None may deceive the Omnipotent Lord.
To those who obey His Word truly in their hearts
shall come Perfect Immortal Life.*

*I will speak about the Greatest One of All.
He is the Lord of Wisdom.
He is the Lord of Truth.
He in His Wisdom guides me to His Light.
His Grace redeeming all the Seekers seek.
The righteous soul shall triumph.*

*Through good thoughts, good words and good deeds
have I seen Him with the eyes of soul,
and next through Ashoi did / realise Him.
Songs of devotion shall we offer Him.
His favour will I seek and Vohu-Manu's.
His Xshathra (Spirit of Service) shall lead us to the abode of Truth,
and Vohu-Manu shall grant unto us deep wisdom.
Through Armaiti shall we discern the true path.*

*This is His promise: Wisdom and Love cherished
within our souls bring Strength to serve:
then shall we gain Perfect Eternal Life and our Lives shall be renewed.*

*See page 41 for Martin Haug's translation of the same Yasna.

*The Devas and their men oppose Him, but He is the Lord of All.
Who so obeys Him is our saviour:
He reveals the path of Life.
Our Friend, our Brother, nay our Father He becomes."*

GATHA SPENTA MAINYU

1. YASNA 47

*"Led by Thy Holy Spirit, man shall attain Thy blessings
through Thy Ameshaspenta.
Led by Thy Holy Spirit to the Best,
his tongue shall utter only words of Love,
and his life shall be guided by one single thought—
that only Ahura Mazda is the Source of Truth. . . ."*

2. YASNA 48

*"When one has conquered by the Truth, at time of last fulfilment
he attains what Teachers False 'delusion' have declared.
Righteousness shall overcome Untruth:
such is Thy Plan, the final shape of Life.
This truth Ashoi teacheth.*

*All Wise Ones have realised this Truth.
Whatever deeds or words lift up man's mind or lower it,
the Self shall follow sure, for better or for worse.
Let Wicked Rulers rule us not, but the good guided by Thy Good
Wisdom.*

*Mother-Earth come unto us bearing the gifts
of strength of soul and Life-renewed.
Mazda hath covered her with food for man;
she feedeth all mankind since the dawn of Life.*

*Keep hatred far from you;
let nothing tempt your minds to violence.
/ yearn for Strength Divine,
yet more, / yearn for blessings from Thee, Lord.
Thou rulest over all, even over those who menace us. . . ."*

3. YASNA 49

*"Still the Corrupter stubbornly resists.
Grant that / conquer him through Love and win.
He teaches Untruth and Duplicity,
and thus he leads his followers astray.*

*Ashoi and Armaiti are not for him,
and never doth he think of Vohu-Manu.
Man should choose the Path of Truth.
The Path of Truth is but the Path of Love.
Renounce all contact with Untruth.
The evil-minded have hate within their hearts;
to Untruth tied, their inner Selves transform them into
Monsters wearing human shape.*

*He who through sacrifice of self doth link himself
and his own Inner Self with Vohu-Manu, shall find Wisdom.
May we choose the Path of Righteousness and go forth
to proclaim what Faith, O Lord, should be Thy devotees'.
Let each one listen, Vohu-Manu in heart, to Ashoi's Wisdom.
To all my people grant this gift: led by Thy Holy Xshathra
may we serve and ever hold Thy inspiration true.*

*Each helper, born to serve, shall always stand away from all Untruth.
In Thine abode do dwell Truthful Souls
and therein also dwell Vohu-Manu, Armaiti and Xshathra.
But Souls whose Inner Light continues dim,
unto this Home of Falsehood shall return,
surrounded by false leaders.
Unto Thy worshipper grant what Thou deemest best."*

4. YASNA 50

*"From whom my Soul may any help command?
None but Thine Ashoi, none but the Highest Love,
invoked with Truth.
The Righteous man who serves Mother-Earth
shall dwell in regions radiant with Thy Sun.*

*/, Thy Singer, lift up my voice with adoration filled:
entrance to Thine abode / shall gain with praise.
/ beseech that I, Thy humble Lover,
come closer unto Thee, through Ashoi's help,
through Vohu-Manu's wonder-working Love....."*

GATHA VOHU-KHSHATHRA

1. YASNA 51

This *Gatha* is the essence of Zarathushtra's preaching that in the service of the meek and the poor is the greatest merit and that by deeds alone can one win salvation. He stresses that here and now is the need for action and within this short span of life can the sincere and true win everlasting happiness in the next life.

*"Xshathra, the Strength Divine, most precious gift,
droppeth like gentle rain upon our Earth,
urging the Inner Self to serve mankind.
Such dedication Ashoi hath ordained.*

*The Highest shall be reached by deeds alone.
My deeds are dedicated to You,
O Lord and Ameshaspentas, teach me to know Your will,
to hold Your Strength....*

*O Thou, Creator of our Mother-Earth,
Creator Thou, of Waters and of Plants,
grant me Perfection and Immortal Life.
Strength to my Soul grant Thou and Life renewed.
Thy Message should be proclaimed unto all.
That man alone shall happy be and wise,
who to the Wise expounds Thy Holy Word.*

*Both parties. True and False, are put to test
by Thy blazing Fire Divine.
This Fiery Test lays bare their Inmost Souls.
That man who leads the world astray
is offspring of the Realm Untrue,
of understanding very low.*

*The dupes of False Ones,
passing through this life give satisfaction scant to Zarathushtra,
no joy do they bring.
Within the space of this ONE life on Earth
Perfection can be reached by fervent Souls ardent in zeal,
sincere in their toil.*

*The False One puts before his Inner Self
a crooked picture of the Path of Truth.
But on the Judgement Bridge his Soul shall
tax him with this teaching false.
Through his own actions and his tongue untrue he goes astray.*

*The Priests of Falsehood never show regard for Thy Commands
and laws to love and guard our Mother Earth.
Her servants they deceive.
These False Ones through false teachings at last into destruction
shall be led.
In the Abode of Untruth shall they dwell. . . .*

*He who strives to understand and reach true Life,
should preach the Laws of Mazda to mankind
better by acts of service than by words.*

*Of one mind are You Ameshaspentas all in granting blessings
unto all mankind:
You teach the Laws of Truth and Love Divine.
We worship You in our adoring hearts.
Through Vohu-Manu and through Strength Divine
shall Mazda-Ahura His Blessings pour.*

** That man, indeed, who makes his every act an act of worship,
led by Ashoi's Law is deemed as best by Mazda-Ahura;
each one of these, with reverence will I recall by name,
and strive to emulate his holy deeds."*

GATHA VAHISHTA-ISHTI

1. YASNA 53

This *Gatha* is by his followers and they begin by saying that every wish of Spitama Zarathushtra has been fulfilled and even those opposing him have learnt to revere His teachings and then go on to say as below:

*"So let them strive with thought and word and deed Mazda to
satisfy.
Let each one choose all deeds of goodness as His worship true.*

*The Faith of Mazda surely shall be filled with the Offspring'
of Zarathushtra's Soul Pouru-Chista, the Perfect Wisdom.
It teaches perfect trust in Vohu-Manu.
This is the Faith meant specially for men,
which in the Father's and the Master's name
assigneth each one's duty unto each.*

*These words I speak to maidens truly wed and to their
comrades young;
bear them in mind.
Let each one strive the other to surpass in Ashoi's Truth
and in Vohu-Manu's Love,
thus each one surely shall reap rich rewards.*

*Even in life on Earth these Truths hold good.
Attracted by Untruth, you find it pleasanter to go astray and the Light
in earth-bound hearts shines dim and dark.*

*When once you come within our Brotherhood,
you shall understand the merits of True life,
of wedded bliss in its devoted zeal,
whether you strive for this life or the next.*

*AH Evil-doers are but dupes at last.
But our good Leaders help our maids and men through these
Eternal Truths.
May Peace descend upon our happy flock.
May Zarathushtra, the Greatest, lead us all again.
Greatest is He, for He hath conquered Death..."*

“This is the original Gatha verse of which Yenghe Hatam is a paraphrase.

THE KUSTI PRAYERS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUDREH AND KUSTI

The Kusti prayers and the significance of the Sudreh and Kusti

Very few who wear the Sudreh, and partake in the ritual of daily prayers known as the Kusti, realise the significance of what they are doing. Those who have clung to these symbols in blind faith will rejoice to find the richness of content in their meaning. Those who, in pride and self-conceit, have cast aside these garments with an easy celerity may return to them with a newly awakened interest, once they perceive they can pray to God with all their heart, in fullness of knowledge. There may be some, however, who, under a covering of smug indifference, may yet have yearnings for a belief that will satisfy their whole being. Such people, not being grounded in any one faith from the beginning, will fall unhesitating victims to every imposition from without and every self-deception from within. To make these

empty vessels overflow with the outpourings of Spenta Mainyu the Holy Spirit is an act of the Divine Will: to fill them with dross, no great miracle.

The Sudreh in Pahlavi is described as Vohu Manik Vastra, the Garment of the Good Mind. Some derive 'Sudreh' from the Avestan 'vastra'. The Sudreh has also been compared with the Persian 'sut rah' meaning the blessed path. White muslin is normally the material used in making this sacred shirt with its large V-shaped neck, its pocket of good deeds' at the point of the V, its short sleeves and numerous seams. The seams were deliberately inserted to show that even the poorest of the poor could, by piecing together odd bits of muslin, make a Sudreh.

The very simplicity of the garment, and the whiteness of the muslin, are meant to symbolise the simplicity and purity of heart of the worshipper. The characteristic feature of the Sudreh is, of course, the Kisseh Kerfeh or 'pocket' of good deeds.

The Kisseh Kerfeh is made of a small piece of folded muslin, about an inch and a half long and from half to three quarters of an inch wide, having a minute slit on one side. Every night, before retiring to rest, the devout Zoroastrian will pray, holding the Kisseh Kerfeh in his left hand, his right upraised in adoration, and offer up to God those 'little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love' which he has striven to perform during the day.

The Avestan word for Kusti is 'Aiwayaonghana', meaning that which encircles the body. Kusti is the Pahlavi rendering of Aiwayaonghana, and means that which circles, the limit or boundary line. The Kusti is a narrow band woven of seventy-two threads of sheep's wool. The seventy-two threads symbolise the seventy-two chapters of the Yasna, a large compilation of miscellaneous prayers including the *Gathas*, and the *Haptang-haiti*. The Kusti is wound thrice round the waist, knotted twice in front, and twice at the back. The three cardinal tenets of the faith—good thoughts, good words and good deeds—are symbolised by the three windings of the Kusti round the waist, while the knots are the pledges the worshipper makes to Ahuramazda to fulfil the commandments laid down in the prayers he recites as he ties the knots. Hence the wearing of the Kusti indicates that a man is in the service of Ahuramazda, the one eternal God, and of none other.

Thus the true Zoroastrian, clothed in the Garment of the Good Mind and encircled by the Sacred Thread, the outward sign of an inward grace, becomes like an impregnable fortress through which no evil can penetrate.

The significance of these symbols is still more apparent when the ritual of the Kusti is examined in detail. The Kusti prayers open with the words, "Kshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao", Glory unto the wise and living God. Then follows the Ashem Vohu (*Yasna* 27.14). Ashoi is derived from the Avestan root 'areta', Sanskrit, Rta meaning Absolute Righteousness. Ashoi, however, signifies more than righteousness or virtue. It also signifies the Divine Law, and the spirit of harmony in the ordered universe. In the *Gathas* it is said that before God created the world and man, He formed Ashoi so that Divine Justice may be manifest through the entire creation (*Yasna* 31. 7). Ashoi, however, is no blind, mechanical force like that of gravitation, but a reflective and sentient power, alert and intelligent, with the capacity to remould man and nature and guide them to their destined end.

Hence, in the *Gathas*, Zarathushtra says, “Ashoi the Divine Law is given us for our choice, the benefit of our faith and the destruction of all falsehood” (*Yasna* 49. 3). Again, in the sermon on Good and Evil, Zarathushtra says it is God Himself who prompts penitent sinners “not to smite the wicked, but to surrender them into the hands of Ashoi the Divine Law”, so that they too may become Ashavant, followers of Ashoi (*Yasna* 30.8). That is why in the Ashem Vohu, Ashoi is said to be the highest good, an eternal joy, one that must be sought for its own sake and is its own reward. God being the absolute and the unconditional, no power of His can be used for an ulterior motive.

The worshipper, having put himself in a proper frame of mind by meditating upon Ashoi, now begins to recite the Kem-na Mazda prayer. This is a composite prayer, the first two paragraphs being two widely separated verses taken from the *Ushtavaiti Gatha*, *Yasna* 46.7 and 44.16 respectively. The third paragraph is a prose exhortation against evil and is taken from the *Ardibehesht Yasht* 17.2 and the *Vendidad* 8.21, while the fourth paragraph consists of a line in *Yasna* 49.10 from the Spenta Mainyu Gatha.

The coherence and unity of the prayer, however, are in no way broken by its composite structure, while the language throughout is Avestan as in the Ashem Vohu. The recitation of the Kem-na Mazda is meant to induce in the reciter a particular state of mind. Like Zarathushtra, he realises he is helpless before an onslaught of evil passions such as anger, lust, envy and haste, unless he turns to God for protection, to His Atar, or Flaming Fire of Thought, and to His Manas, or Pure Mind.

The very fact that Atar and Manas are placed together in this manner makes it quite clear that no physical fire is here meant. The Flaming Fire of Thought is nothing else, save the mental honesty in a man, that searching, critical activity of the mind that uncovers every inner evil and destroys it in the fiery indignation of its zeal. If it were not for the Pure Mind, and the Flaming Fire of Thought which issues from it, no man would feel the necessity of fighting against evil passions, nor would he perceive that Ashoi, the Divine Law, was established through the workings of these two heavenly qualities. Only a ruthless intellectual honesty will enable man to reach out and palpably contact unseen realities in the world of the spirit. Having achieved a measure of insight into these things, the devotee humbly begs God, in the words of Zarathushtra, ‘Reveal unto me Thy true religion, and grant me an understanding of Thy ways’.

An overwhelming awareness of the unseen enemies which surround man now comes upon the worshipper. They are lies, deceits, veiled hypocrisies, self-deceptions and insidious temptations of every kind. No weapon can pierce these unseen enemies except a body of true doctrine, the Sengha, Divine Truths or Teachings, the very kernel of Zoroastrian preaching. Primed with these Divine Truths, the lover of God prays for prophetic vision.

Fully strengthened, he now turns upon the very source of evil with a thunderous exhortation. The prayer ends with a touching appeal to Armaiti, Divine Devotion, described in the *Gathas* as ‘the joy-giver, Armaiti, who nourished and blessed the universe with the bounty of her grace’ (*Yasna* 47.3). A repetition of the Ashem Vohu completes the whole.

The Ahuramazda Khodae, recited immediately after the Kem-na Mazda, is a loose paraphrase of that prayer in Pazand, the language used in late Sassanian times when this prayer was composed. The last paragraph is in Avesta and borrows a phrase from a Gathic verse, *Yasna* 50.11, in the *Spenta Mainyu Gatha*.

Compare also *Yasna* 46.19 in the *Ushtavaiti Gatha*. Several centuries have elapsed between the writing of these two prayers. The Avestan of the Kem-na Mazda was not understood by the majority of the Sassanians. Hence the need of a free translation based on the earlier prayer. Ahuramazda Khodae is charged with a spirit of humility and penitence. By this confession of sin, every Zoroastrian strengthens himself in spirit, and pledges himself more wholeheartedly to the service of Ahuramazda, the One Eternal God. It is during this prayer that the Kusti is wound round the waist.

As soon as the Ahuramazda Khodae is completed, the devotee recites the Yatha Ahu Vairyo twice over, and twice over he ties a knot in front to show that he has placed his seal upon the prayer, and to affirm solemnly to himself that he will do all in his power to ‘establish the sovereignty of God upon earth.’ The dramatic significance of the ritual at this point should not be overlooked. It is only after a true Zoroastrian has renounced his sins before God that he is capable of carrying out the commandments laid down in the Yatha Ahu Vairyo. This is considered the most ancient prayer in the Avesta, and the most holy.

In *Yasna* 19, the Yatha Ahu Vairyo is described as being the first creation of God. In the opening line of prayer, the words Ahu and Ratu are sharply contrasted. Ahu means living, and is an epithet of God Himself. He is Ahura, the Living God. Ratu here means prophet, though the root meaning of the word indicates the highest of its kind, the very essence of a thing. Hence every man, every animal and every plant is said to have its own Ratu.

As dramatically defined in Visparad 1.1: Vairyo means to choose, to exercise free will. Thus the Ratu, the prophet or man of prophetic vision, is likened unto God in His free will. Such a man’s needs must follow Ashoi the Divine Law, needs must perform every act of his earthly life with the help of Vohu-Manu, the Good Mind, and dedicate each act to God Himself. No ‘dark, self-righteous pride’ can affect this man for he claims no virtue to himself, the naked intent of his will being centred in God, and none other.

Vohu-Manu is one of the four great powers of God. In the *Gathas* it is written that when Aeshma (Wrath) polluted human existence and evil came into its own, God sent to His true believers Ashoi (the Divine Law), Vohu-Manu (the Good Mind), Khshathra, (Moral Power), and Armaiti (Divine Devotion) to withstand the onslaughts of Wrath (*Yasna* 30.7). These four powers are continually present with the true Zoroastrian and enable him to serve and cherish the meek and lowly of heart, and through that service, establish the sovereignty of God upon earth.

The final knot of the Kusti is now tied with the recitation of the Ashem Vohu. The necessity of cleaving fast to Ashoi and all it stands for is again emphasised.

The ritual comes to an end with the Jas-me, Avanghe Mazda, the Zoroastrian confession of faith. The prayer is in Avestan, and forms the last two paragraphs

of *Yasna* 12. Our faith is called Daena Mazdayasni because it teaches that a man can know God only through Daena, His Divine Revelation. Daena has been compared with the Sanskrit Dharma or Law of Religion, and also with a man's conscience. It is Daena who opens our inward eyes that we may see God, and Sraosha, Divine Intuition, who opens our inward ears that we may hear Him.

The Daena Mazdayasni is called the greatest, the best and the most profound of all beliefs which are or shall be because it contains the laws of Ahura, the One Eternal God, and not because Zarathushtra brought it to the world. These laws are the Sengha or Divine Truths mentioned in the Kem-na Mazda, and the Manthra or Living Word of God through which man receives salvation. It was this Manthra that Zarathushtra was expressly asked to proclaim to mankind, along with the Divine Law (*Yasna* 29.7).

It will thus be seen that the main purpose of the ritual involved in the reciting of the Kusti is so to rivet the attention of the worshipper on the spoken word that nought will come between him and his God while he prays. To cleanse ourselves before the eyes of God, to commune with Him in humility and love, to be in His constant friendship, these are what the Kusti helps us to achieve. Through love of Ashoi and the Daena Mazdayasni the Kusti draws us towards God, so that the exquisite opening lines of the *Haptan Yasht* become a living reality.

“We worship Ahura Mazda the wise and living God, who centres Himself in Ashoi the Divine Law, in the spirit of harmony in the ordered universe and in the quintessence of virtue, for our hearts are turned towards Ashoi, and our desire is for the Mazdayasni religion.

We praise the Immortal Shining Ones (Ameshaspentas) strong in knowledge and supreme in sovereign power, for our hearts are turned towards Ashoi, and our desire is for the Mazdayasni religion.

We admire with a wondering admiration every Ashoi-creation, wrought by the power of God, whether in the world of the spirit or in the world of matter, for our hearts are turned towards Ashoi, and our desire is for the Mazdayasni religion,”(*Yasna* 35.1).

PRAYERS, RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

Pronunciation Guide

The vowels below should be pronounced as in the words next to them.

a	again, contrary, necessary
ā	car, far, bar
e	get, set, met
ē	lake, make, sake
i	it, bit, sit
ī	feet, meet, heat
o	for, door, shore
ō	sought, caught, ought
u	cut, full, pull
ū	cool, fool, rule

The consonant “Y” should be pronounced as in the word, “Yes”; if two or more consonants come together, they should be pronounced as conjunct consonants, e.g. street, special, through.

Daily Prayers

In Avesta

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ASHEM VOHŪ
Ashem vohū vahistem astī.
Ushtā astī,ushtā ahmāi
Hyat Ashāi vahishtāi Ashem

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YATHĀ AHŪ VAIRYŌ
Yathā Ahū Vairyō
Athā ratush, ashāтчīt hachā,
Vanghēush dazdā mananghō
Shyaothnanām anghēush Mazdāi;

Kshathremchā Ahurāi ā
Yim dregubyō dadat vāstārem

In English

ASHEM VOHU
Righteousness (Ashoi) is not only good but it is the highest blessing which Thou, Ahuramazda, hast bestowed upon man. The supreme bliss which lies in Ashoi comes to them who practise it for its own sake, that is, for the pure love of it, without thought of fear or favour, or of punishment or reward.

YATHA AHU VAIRYO
Dear Ahuramazda, men in this world lay claim to greatness for many a varied reason but the truly great man in Thine eyes is the one who is wholly righteous, who has acquired an insight into Thy Law of Ashoi and who guides and helps others along its path. Thy gift of Vohu Manu is vouchsafed unto them who serve Thy cause and purpose in life. Thy very strength and power are reserved for those who succour the poor and lowly.

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KĒM-NĀ MAZDĀ
Kēm-nā mazdā! mavaitē pāyūm dadāt,
Hyat mā drēgvāo didareshatā aēnanghē.
Anyēm Thwahmāt āthraschā Mananghaschā
Yayāo shyaothnāish Ashem thraoshtā, Ahurā!
Tām mōi dāstvām daēnyāi frāvaochā.
Kē verethrem-jā Thwā pōi sēnghā yōi hentī
Chithrā mōi dām ahūmbish ratūm chīzdi.
At hōi vohū Sraoshō jantū mananghā
Mazdāahmāi yahmāi vashī kahmāichīt.
Pāta-nō tbishyantat pairi
Mazdāoscha Ārmaitishcha Spentascha.
Nasē daēvī drukhsh, nasē daēvōchithrē!
Nasē daēvō-frakarshtē, nasē daēvō fradāitē!
Apa druksh nasē, apa druksh dvāra apa druksh vīnasē!
Apākhēdhrē, apa-nasyēhē!
Mā mērēnchainīsh gaēthāo astavāitīsh ashahē.
Nemaschā yā Ārmaitish īzāchā.
Ashem Vohū (1)

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AHURAMAZDA KHŌDĀĒ
Ahuramazda Khōdāē,
Ahreman, awādashān dūr awāzdāshtār;
Zad shekashtēh bād!
Ahreman, devān, drujān, jādūān, darvandān, kīkān,
karafān, sāstārān gūnehgārān, āshmōgān.
Darvandān dushmanā frīān zad shekashtēh bād!
Dūsh-pādshāhān awādashān bād!
Dūshmanā stōh bād!
Dūshmanā awādashān bād!
Ahuramazda Khōdāē!
Az hamā gunāh patēt pashēmānūm,
az harvastīn dushmat, duzūkht,
duzvarsht,
mem pa gētī manīd,
ōēm gōft, ōēm kard,
ōēm jast, ōēm būn būd ēstēd.
Az ān gunāh, manashnī, gavashnī,
kunashnī,
tani ravānī gētī mīnōānī,
Okhē awāksh pashēmān
Pa sē gavashnī pa patēt hōm.
Khshnaothra Ahurahē Mazdāō!

KEM-NA MAZDA
Dear All-wise Ahuramazda, I find myself surrounded in this world by evil and evil-doers. There is so much temptation everywhere around me. Who will protect and strengthen me in such a world except Thee, Thy Holy Fire and Thy gift of Vohu Manu (the Divine Mind or the Wisdom of God) ? Help me, dear God, successfully to make my way in life by cultivating Vohu Manu and by revering Thy divine symbol, the Holy Fire. Within me also burns a part of the same Holy Fire, the Divine Spark or Fravashi, which not only gives me life-sustaining warmth but provides me with divine guidance and energy to fulfil my mission in life. Help me, dear Ahuramazda, to keep my mind always clean, fresh and receptive and to cultivate intimate friendship and oneness with my Fravashi. May all wickedness and evil, and all those who indulge in them, perish and utterly disappear from this world, and may Thy divine law of Ashoi, righteousness and virtue prevail. May I be an active soldier in the cause of Ashoi throughout my life.

AHURAMAZDA KHODAE

Dear Ahuramazda, may Ahriman, the creator of evil, and all those who follow in his footsteps, all those who are wicked and sinful, all those who are wilfully blind and wilfully deaf, all tyrants, evil-doers, sinners, cruel people, enemies of truth and virtue—may all such people be overcome and be rooted out of this world. May they be destroyed effectively and finally.

Oh Almighty Mazda, I am myself a weak person and prone to fall into temptation. Please forgive me my weaknesses of thought, word or deed. Pardon my sins of the flesh or the spirit, my sins of omission and commission, sins committed knowingly or unknowingly, and help me to abjure sin, to turn my back to it and to remain virtuous. I will endeavour my utmost to keep away from evil of any kind and follow the straight and noble path of righteousness.

As a pledge of my determination to be good, I tie this Kusti three times around my waist, constantly to remind me of my Prophet’s three simple tenets of manasni, gavasni and kunusni.

The four knots of the Kusti will always remind me that the entire creation of this world, and the innumerable worlds beyond, is of Thy will and making, and therefore we are all bound together as one whole,

Tarōiditē Anghrahē Mainyēush!
Haithyā varshṭām hyat vasnā fershōtemem.
Staomi Ashem. Ashem Vohu (1)
Yathā Ahū Vairyō (2), Ashem Vohū (1).

with Thy presence. Thy spirit and Thy love pervading everything everywhere; that it was my holy Prophet Zarathushtra who first brought to us the light and knowledge of Thy power and glory, Thy wisdom and Thy love; that Zarathushtra's religion is based on purity and virtue in every aspect of one's life, and in determined resistance to, and struggle against, evil; and that it is my sacred duty to serve humanity and be a co-sharer in the joys and sorrows of my fellowmen. May it be as I pray.

*Sraōsha ashō tagī, tan-farmān,
shēkaft zīn, zīn-awazār,
sālārē dāmānē Ahuramazda bērasād!*

Az hamā gunāh patēt pashēmānūm,

*Az harvastīn dushmat, duzūkht,
duzvarsht,*

*Mēm pa gētī manīd ōēm gōft, ōēm kard,
ōēm jast, ōēm bun būd ēsted;*

*Az ān gunāh manashnī, gavashnī,
kunashnī
tanī ravānī gētī mīnōānī
ōkhē awākhsh pashēmān
pa sē gavashnī pa patēt hōm.*

Yathā Ahū Vairyō (5)
Ashem Vohū (3)

*Fravarānē Mazdayasnō Zarathushtrish
Vīdaēvō Ahura tkaēshō.*

(Note: Recite here the Gāh concerned)

*Sraoshahē ashyēhē takhmahē tanumāthrahē
darshi-draosh Āhūiryēhē,
khshnaothra yasnāicha vahmāicha
khshnaothrāicha frasastayaēcha.
Yathā ahū vairyō zaotā frā mē mrūtē,
Athā ratush Ashāchtit hacha frā
ashava vīdhvāo mraotū.*

*Sraoshem ashīm huraodhem. vērēthrājanem,
frādat-gaēthem ashavanem,
Ashahē ratūm yazamaidē.*

Ahunem vairīm tanūm pāiti,
 Ahunem vairīm tanūm pāiti,
 Ahunem vairīm tanūm pāiti.

Yathā ahū vairyō (1)
(here recite whole 'Kēm-nā Mazdā')

Yathā ahū vairyō (2)
Yasnemcha vahmemcha aojascha
zavarecha āfrīnāmi, Staoshahē
ashyēhē takhmahē tanumāthrahē
darshi draosh āhūiryēhē.

Ashem Vohū (1)

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HĀVAN GĀH
(from sunrise to 12.40 noon)
Hāvanē-ē ashaonē Ashahē rathwē
Yasnāicha vahmāicha khshnaothrāicha,
Frasastayaēcha. Sāvanghē-ē vīsyāicha
Ashaonē Ashahē rathwē yasnāicha,
Vahmāicha, khshnaothrāicha
frasastayaēcha

religious lore. He is the celestial teacher of the Mazda—worshipping religion, even as Zarathushtra was, and still remains, the terrestrial. He, the wakeful and watchful, never rests by day and night.

When the shadows of the evening cover the earth and the gathering darkness proclaims the approach of the night, Sraosha, driving his heavenly chariot, guards the sleeping world against the onslaught of Aeshma, the demon of Wrath and against all forces of evil.

Sraosha comes unto him whom Thou, Ahuramazda, dost will. May he then come unto us who long to live under his constant guardianship. Vanish from the house and the clan and the town and the country, evil of all kind, and let Sraosha be welcomed by the righteous as a friendly, beloved and an honoured guest.

I offer my sincere repentance, dear God, for all evil of thought, word or deed that may have emanated from me, and consciously turn back from sin. With good thoughts of the mind, good words and good deeds, I pray Ahuramazda that Thy Sraosha may enter our abodes and live in our midst for our guidance and protection. May he help us to understand and obey Thy Law of Ashoi, to love our fellow-men and to dedicate ourselves to the service of others. May he guide us to conquer evil and to be true for the pure love of truth.

May kindly Sraosha also be near me at the end, when I sleep my last sleep on earth, and gently and tenderly wake me in Thy resplendent heaven. May he hold my hand and guide my footsteps to the greater life beyond, when the time comes for me to embark. May I prove worthy, through constant and conscientious observance of Thy religious ordinances, of the help, guidance and protection of Sraosha.

HAVAN GAH

May it please the Lord ! During Havan, the time for the Haoma ceremony (which denotes the progress of man towards immortality), when the Lord of the Village carries on His work, I declare myself to be a follower of Zarathushtra, opposed to Evil and acting in accord with the Law of Ahuramazda.

For the worship and glorification of Mithra, the Lord of Light, of Truth and of Justice, who sees and hears everything on earth, may the Chief Priest

Tarōidītē Anghrahē Mainyēush!
Haithyā varshām hyat vasnā fershōtemem.
Staomi Ashem. Ashem Vohu (1)
Yathā Ahū Vairyō (2), Ashem Vohū (1).

MAZDAYASNO AHMI

Dear Ahuramazda, I pray for Thy love and help. I ask this of Thee
three times in humble submission.

I acknowledge myself to be a Mazdayasnian Zoroastrian, i.e. Thy follower in accordance with the true religion taught by Thee to our dear Prophet Zarathushtra and passed on by Him to us—the religion which has stood us in such good stead for hundreds of years. I offer my utter obedience to the three-fold principle of manasni, gavasni and kunusni, i.e. good thoughts, good words and good deeds which is the rock foundation of this good religion.

My religion enjoins me to put an end to all forms of quarrel, hatred, greed and jealousy, and to promote a spirit of love, helpfulness and goodwill with kindness, virtue and selflessness.

I hereby pay my homage to all those men and women who, because of their excellent knowledge and observance of Thy law of Ashoi, have found favour in Thine eyes, Ahuramazda.

I acknowledge, dear Ahuramazda, that all the blessings which I enjoy, whether of the body or the mind or the spirit, are the outcome of Thy kindness and love, and I am deeply grateful for them. I also thank Thee for having given me the light and knowledge of Thy wondrous creation and sublime spirit, and of the great life hereafter, through the words of our beloved Prophet Zarathushtra. My heartfelt gratitude to Thee again for all Thy blessings and for this beautiful religion unfolded to us through Zarathushtra.

May we always remain worthy of Thy love.

SRAOSHA BAJ

Glory be unto Thee, dear Ahuramazda and to Thy entire creation.

Thy word incarnate, Ahuramazda, is Sraosha (Divine Intuition and Obedience), the impersonation of Thy

SRŌSH BĀJ
Khshnaothra Ahurahē Mazdāo:
Ashem Vohu (1)

*Pa nāmē Yazdān Ahuramazda Khōdāē,
awazūnī gōrje khōrēh awazāyād!*

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AIWISRŪTHREM GĀH
(from sunset to midnight)

Aiwisrūthremāi aibigayāi ashāonē

Ashahē rathwē yasnāicha vahmāicha
khshnaothrāicha frasastayaēcha.
Frādat-vīspām hujyāitē ē
Zarathushtrōtemāicha ashaonē
Ashahē rathwē,
yasnāicha vahmāicha khshnaothrāicha
frasastayaēcha.

(Zaota) recite “Yatha Ahu Vairyo”, and may his
associate (Rathvi) recite “Atha Ratush ashatchit hacha”.

I worship Ahuramazda, Zarathushtra and the
Ameshaspentas.

I worship the noble, brave, world-uplifting, guiding spirits
(Fravashis) of the pure.

I worship Havan, the time for the Haoma ceremony (which
denotes the progress of man towards immortality). I worship
the religion enjoined by Ahuramazda.

I worship “Savangha” (the earning of livelihood), and “Visya”
(the Lord of the Village).

I worship Mithra, the Lord of Light, of Truth and Justice, who
sees and hears everything on earth.

Thee do I worship, O purifying Fire, son of Ahuramazda.

I worship the souls (Urvana) of the departed, united to the
guiding spirits (Fravashis) of the pure.

I worship Ahuramazda, the Supreme Lord, the most righteous
of all. I revere the religion of Zarathushtra, I revere all deeds of
goodness, done and to be done.

Ahuramazda knows who amongst the living are the true devo-
tees—those devotees do I revere.

I revere the worship, the glory and the power of Mithra, the
Lord of Light, of Truth and of Justice, who sees and hears
everything on earth.

AIWISRUTHREM GAH

May it please the Lord! During Aiwisruthrem (prayer time),
the time of purity and of progress towards the good life, when
the High Priest carries on his work, I declare myself to be a
follower of Zarathushtra, opposed to evil and acting in accord
with the law of Ahuramazda.

For the worship and glorification of Behram Yezd (who grants
the success that comes of final liberation), and of the other
beneficent angels created by Ahuramazda, and for the timely
arrival of all seasons of the year, may the Chief Priest (Zaota)
recite “Yatha Ahu Vairyo”, and may his associate (Rathvi)
recite “Atha Ratush ashatchit hacha”

I worship Ahuramazda, Zarathushtra and the Ameshaspentas.

I worship the noble, brave, world-uplifting, guiding spirits
(Fravashis) of the pure. I adore the power of beneficent and
timely prayers.

I worship Aiwisruthrem (prayer time). I worship Fire, son of
Ahuramazda, the universal purifier, and all articles of utility
created by Ahuramazda.

I worship “Fradat-Vispam Huzyaiti” (all progress towards
good life). I worship Zarathushtra and the power of be-
neficent and holy prayers as well as the High Priest who
practises the teachings of Zarathushtra.

I worship all righteous leaders of all grades, and kinds,
spiritual as well as temporal.

I worship all righteous young men and all patriots, whether
of this country or of foreign lands.

I worship all righteous women who are truthful, fertile and
obedient to their husbands.

I worship the noble, brave, world-uplifting, guiding spirits
(Fravashis) of the pure. I worship Behram Yezd (who grants
the success that comes of final liberation) and the other be-
neficent angels created by Ahuramazda. The timely arrival
of all seasons of the year do I admire.

Thee do I worship, O purifying Fire, son of Ahuramazda.

I worship the souls (Urvana) of the departed, united to the
guiding spirits (Fravashis) of the pure.

I worship Ahuramazda, the Supreme Lord, the most right-
eous of all. I revere the religion of Zarathushtra, I revere all
deeds of goodness, done and to be done.

Ahuramazda knows who amongst the living are the true
devotees—those devotees do I revere.

I revere the worship, the glory and the power of Behram
Yezd (who grants the success that comes of final liberation),
of the other beneficent Yezds created by Ahuramazda and
of the timely arrival of all seasons of the year.

AHMAI RAESCHA

May the Lord grant unto the true worshipper health,
strength, happiness, wise progeny, long life and the
Kingdom of Heaven!

Click to
Listen

AHMĀI RAĒSCHA
Ahmāi raēscha kharenascha, ahmāi tanvō
dravatātem, ahmāi tanvō vazdvare, ahmāi tanvō
vērēthrem, ahmāi īshtīm paourush-khāthrām, ahmāi
āsnāmchit frazantīm, ahmāi dareghām
dareghōjītīm, ahmāi vahishtem ahūm ashaonām,
raochanghem, vīspōkhāthrem.
Atha jamyāt yatha āfrīnāmi.

Ashem Vohū (1).

Click to Listen	<p>HAZANGHREM</p> <p><i>Hazanghrem baēshazanām, baēvare baēshazanām; hazanghrem baēshazanām, baēvare baēshazanām, hazanghrem baēshazanām, baēvare baēshazanām !</i></p> <p>Ashem Vohū (1)</p> <p>JASA MĒ AVANGHĒ MAZDA</p> <p><i>Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!</i></p> <p><i>Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!</i></p> <p><i>Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!</i></p> <p>Amahē hutāshahē huraodhahē vērethraghnahē Ahuradhātahē, Vanaintyāoscha Uparatātō Rāmanō khāstrahē Vayaosh Uparō-kairyēhē taradhātō anyāish dāmān, aētāt Tē Vayō yat Tē asti Spentō-mainyaom, Thwāshahē Khadhātahē, Zravānahē Akamahē Zravānahē Dareghō khadhātahē.</p> <p>Ashem Vohū (1) KĒRFĒH MŌZD Kērfēh mōzd gunāh guzārēshn-rā kunam, Ashahī Ravān dushārm-rā ham kērfeh hamā vēhānē haft kēshvar zamīn zamīn-pēhnā, rūd-darānā, khōrshid-bālā, bundehād bērasād! Ashō bēd dērzī.</p> <p>Atha jamyāt, yatha āfrīnāmi!</p> <p>Ashem Vohū (1)</p> <p>Click to Listen</p> <p>NEMĀZ Ō CHERĀG</p> <p><i>Note: It is ordinarily known as 'Namaskār Cherāg-nō' and is recited before a lighted lamp.</i></p> <p>Pā-nāmē Yazdān Ahuramazda Khodāe awazūnī gōrjē khorēh awazāyād; Ātash-Dādgāh Ādar frā.</p> <p>Az hamā gunāh patēt pashēmānūm; az harvastīn dushmat, duzūkht, duzvarsht. mem pa getī manīd, ōēm goft, ōēm kard, ōēm jast, ōēm bun būd ēstēd. Az ān gunāh manashnī, gavashnī, kunashnī tanī ravanī, gētī mīnōānī, okhē awāksh pashēmān, pa sē gavashnī pa patēt hōm.</p> <p>Khshnaothra Ahurahē Mazdāo! Nemase-tē Ātarsh Mazdāo Ahurahē, hudhāo mazishā yazata!</p> <p>Ashem Vohū (1) (recite thrice)</p> <p>(recite here Ahmāi-raēsha; Hazanghrem; Jasa mē avanghē Mazda; Kērfēh Mōzd).</p>
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HAZANGHREM

May the Lord grant unto the true worshipper good health a thousandfold, good health ten-thousandfold!

JASA ME AVANGHE MAZDA

Come to my help, O Ahuramazda! I profess the Mazdayasnian religion and am a devotee of Zarathushtra. I admire good thoughts, good words and good deeds. I dedicate myself to the excellent Mazdayasnian religion which preaches peace, nonviolence, disarmament and self-sacrifice and shows the path of righteousness. Of all the faiths that have been or that shall be, the faith of Ahuramazda revealed by Zarathushtra is the loftiest and the best. Unto Ahuramazda do I attribute all good. Such indeed is the faith to which I dedicate myself.

KERFEH MOZD

In order to win forgiveness for my sins, may I gain the reward of good deeds. May all good men be blessed with Ashoi as wide as the earth, as long as the rivers and as bright as the sun ! So may it be!

NEMAZ O CHERAG

In the name of Ahuramazda do I start this prayer. May His radiance increase! To the glory of the fire dedicated to Mithra (Dadgah)! For every bad thought which I may have ever harboured, for every bad word which I may have uttered, and for every bad deed of which I may ever have been guilty, I do repent and from these do I firmly resolve to refrain.

May it please the Lord!

I bow in reverence and worship to thee, O beneficent Fire, the highest amongst the Yezds.

Click to Listen

ASTAVĀNĪ Ō DĪN

Note: It is ordinarily known as 'Din-nō Kalmō i.e. confession of faith, in Pazend language with Avesta Khshnuman.

Bā nām-ē Yazad. bakhshāyandēh bakhshāyashgarē meherbān.
Razishtayāo chistayāo. Mazda-dhātāyāo ashaonyāo, Daēnayāo Vanghuyāo Māzdayashnōish.

Dīn bēh rāst va dōrōst, kē khodāē bar khalk ferastādēh īn hast, kē Zartosht avōrdēh hast;
Dīn Dīnē Zartōsht, Dīnē Ahuramazd, dādēh Zartōsht Spitamān. Ashaonē

Ashem Vohū (1)
(recite thrice).

Click to Listen

TAN-DŌRŌSTĪ

Bā nām-ē Yazad bakhshāyandēh bakhshāyashgar meherbān.
Yathā Ahū Vairyō (2)

Tan-dōrōstī dēr-zīvashnhī āwāyad; khorēh anghad ashahīdār; yazdānē mīnōān, yazdānē getiān, haft, Ameshāspandān myazd rōshan hamē be-rasād!
in dōāyā bād, īn khōāhā bād! hamē andar kasārā Zarathushṭī Dīn shād bād! Aēdūn bād! yā bārī Khodā! Khodāvandē ālamra, hamē Anjuman-rā (name here the person or persons for whose well-being you pray)* rā bā farzandān, hazār sāl dēr. Bēdār, shād bēdār, tan-dōrōst bēdār, aedun bēdār! Bar sarē arzāniyā, sālḥāē bisyār va karanḥāē bishumār, bākī va pāyandēh dār; hazārān hazār āfrīn bād, sāl khojasteh bād; rōz farrōkh bād, māh mubārāk bād ! Chand sāl, chand rōz, chand māh, bisyār sāl arzānīdār, yazashnē va nyāyēshnē va rādī va zōr barashnē. Ashahīdār awarē hamā kār ō kerfēhā, tan-dōrōstī bād, nekī bād, khub bād ! Aēdun bād aēduntaraz bād ! Pa Yazdān va Ameshāspandān kāmē bād !

Ashem Vohū (1)

* If the recital is for a Behdin, prefix the word Behdin before the name of both man and woman; if a member of the priestly class, use the word “Ervad” before his name if he has gone through the “Navar” ceremony, otherwise prefix the word “Osta” to his name. Before the name of a woman from a priestly class use the word “Osti”.

By the time you have finished reading this book, the meanings of most prayers must now be clear to you and therefore it is my earnest request that you say your daily prayers in Avesta. Elsewhere I have said, to preserve your identity, see that you maintain a Zoroastrian name for yourself and your family and by saying your prayers in Avesta, you will be able to better consolidate and maintain your Zoroastrian identity. In time you will find it will also bring you and your family a feeling of completeness and a desire to pray in the Avesta only.

ASTAVANI O DIN

In the name of the beneficent, forgiving, all-loving Ahuramazda, do I start this prayer. To the glory of our great religion ! The one and only religion sent down by Ahuramazda for the salvation of the world, which is noble as well as lofty, is the religion of Zarathushtra.

TAN-DOROSTI

In the name of the beneficent, forgiving, all-loving Ahuramazda, do I start this prayer.

Good health is essential to longevity. May my prayer be accepted! May my wish be fulfilled ! May the religion of Zarathushtra prosper! Amen !

O Ahuramazda! May the Head of the State and all his subjects (Anjuman), and* . . .with all his/her progeny live for a thousand years, full of joy and health ! Amen !

A thousand blessings on them ! May the year be auspicious and the day memorable!

One hundred and one names of Ahuramazda

Note: These names are generally recited after finishing the prayer. Some, however, recite them at the commencement of the prayer, whereas some recite them both at the commencement and at the end of the prayer.

1.	Yazad	Worthy of worship
2.	Harvesp-tavan	Omnipotent
3.	Harvesp-agah	Omniscient
4.	Harvesp-khuda	The Lord of the universe
5.	Abadah	Having no beginning
6.	Abi-anjam	Having no end
7.	Buneshteh	The source of all creation
8.	Frakhtan-teh	The noble End of everything
9.	Chamag	The Lord of reasoning
10.	Parjatarah	The Exalted
11.	Tum-afik	The most innocent
12.	Abarvand	The Unique
13.	Parvanda	Within everybody
14.	An-aiyafah	Perfection itself
15.	Ham-aiyafah	One who has the measure of everybody
16.	Adaro	The Most Righteous
17.	Gira	The Supreme Control
18.	A-chem	The causeless Cause
19.	Chamana	The cause of all causes
20.	Safna	The Bringer of prosperity
21.	Afaza	The Lord of Plenty
22.	Nasha	The friend of all
23.	Parvara	The Maintainer of all
24.	Iyanah	One who looks after everybody
25.	Ain-aenah	The Creator of all shapes and forms
26.	An-ainah	Having no physical form
27.	Khroshidtum	The Firmest of the firm
28.	Minotum	The most invisible
29.	Vasna	Omnipresent
30.	Harvastum	All in all
31.	Hu-sepas	Deserving of thanks
32.	Har-hamid	Of good nature
33.	Har-nek-fareh	The haloed Spirit
34.	Besh-tarna	The Reliever of all pain and suffering
35.	Taronish	The Enemy of all evil
36.	An-aoshak	Immortal
37.	Farsak	The Father of all progress
38.	Pajoh-dahad	The Creator of good temper
39.	Khvafar	The supreme Judge
40.	Avekhshiaeya	The Merciful
41.	Abarza	The most generous
42.	A-satoh	The Unconquerable

43.	Rakhoh	The Independent
44.	Varun	Worthy of the faith reposed in Him
45.	A-farefah	One who never deceives
46.	Be-farefah	The Undeceived
47.	A-dui	Needing no protection
48.	Kame-rad	The Lord of desire
49.	Faruman-kam	One who can direct as He pleases
50.	Aekh-tan	The One and only
51.	A-farmosh	The unforgettable one
52.	Hamarna	The Settler of all accounts
53.	Sanaea	One who is acquainted with all
54.	A-tars	The Undaunted
55.	A-bish	Free from pain and suffering
56.	Afrazdum	The most Exalted
57.	Ham-chun	Eternally the same
58.	Mino-stih-gar	The Creator of heavenly peace
59.	Amino-gar	The Creator of all that is spiritual
60.	Mino-nahab	The hidden Spirit
61.	Adar-bad-gar	One who can change fire into air
62.	Adar-nam-gar	One who can change fire into water
63.	Bad-adar-gar	One who can change air into fire
64.	Bad-nam-gar	One who can change air into water
65.	Bad-gel-gar	One who can reduce air to ashes
66.	Bad-gerad-tum	One who can reduce air to dust
67.	Adar Kibarit-tum	One who can change fire into a precious stone
68.	Bad-gar-jae	One who produces fresh air everywhere
69.	Ab-tum	The Creator of the plentiful waters
70.	Gel-adar-gar	One who can transform ashes into fire
71.	Gel-vad-gar	One who can transform ashes into air
72.	Gel-nam-gar	One who can transform ashes into water
73.	Gar-gar	The master Artisan
74.	Gar-o-gar	The Fulfiller of all desires
75.	Gar-a-gar	The Creator of mankind
76.	Gar-a-gar-gar	The Creator of the entire universe
77.	Agara-gar	The Creator of the four elements of nature
78.	Agaragar-gar	The Creator of the stars
79.	A-guman	The Undoubted
80.	A-zaman	The Infinite
81.	A-khuan	The Ever-Awake
82.	Amasht	The supreme Intelligence
83.	Fashutana	One who looks after the well-being of all
84.	Padmani	The Lord of moderation
85.	Firozgar	The Triumphant
86.	Khudavand	The King of the universe
87.	Ahuramazd	The omniscient Creator of all life
88.	Abarin-kuhan-tavan	The Preserver of all that is ancient
89.	Abrin-no-tavan	The great Rejuvenator
90.	Vaspan	One who reaches the entire creation
91.	Vaspar	The Lord beneficent
92.	Khawar	The Creator of all favours
93.	Ahu	Existence itself, the one and only
94.	Awakhshidar	The Forgiver of sins
95.	Dadar	The Fountain of justice
96.	Rayomand	The Lord of all treasures
97.	Khorehomand	Surrounded by a halo
98.	Davar	One who renders even-handed justice
99.	Kerfegar	One who recognises all merit
100.	Bokhtar	The Reliever of all troubles
101.	Frashogar	One who has ordained the transformation from the human to the divine

The Zoroastrian Calendar

Our Calendar
Our day begins at 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 every year is 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): the 1st, 8th, 15th and 23rd which are Sabbath days for rest and worship. There are three sects amongst the Parsis, with their separate calendars: the majority (Shahanshai) has its new year in August, the Kadimis and Iranis in July, and Faslis in March. The present Parsi year is named after Yazdegard III, the last Persian Emperor, whose coronation took place 1,375 years ago, on day I, month I, of the Shahanshai year.

Names of the Parsi Roz and Maah

Roz (Names of the days)					
1.	Ahur-Mazd	11.	Khorshed	20.	Behraam
2.	Behman	12.	Mohor	21.	Raam
3.	Ardi-Behsht	13.	Teer	22.	Gowad
4.	Shehrevar	14.	Gosh	23.	Daep-Deen
5.	Asfandaad-Asfandarmard	15.	Dep-Mehr	24.	Deen
6.	Khordaad	16.	Mehr	25.	Ashishvangh
7.	Amardaad	17.	Sarosh	26.	Aastaad
8.	Dep-aadar	18.	Rashne	27.	Aasmaan
9.	Aadar	19.	Farvardeen-Fravardeen	28.	Jamiaad
10.	Avan			29.	Marespand
				30.	Aneraan
Maah (Names of the months)					
	Farvardeen-	Amardaad		Aadar	
	Fravardeen	Shehrevar		Deh	
	Ardi-Behsht	Mehr		Behman	
	Khordaad	Avan		Asfandarmad	
	Teer				

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 in the creation of the universe, of course, symbolically, as in the six days of the Bible. Later, these sections also became synonymous with the Iranian seasons of ancient times:

(a) Maidyozarema (midspring) are the first 45 days ending with the fifteenth day 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) are the next 160 days, ending with the fifteenth day of the fourth month. Water was created during this evolutionary stage (cooling of the nebula to vapour and water).

(c) Paitishahema (sowing season) are the next 75 days ending with the thirtieth day of the sixth month. During this stage the earth was created (through further cooling and evaporation).

(d) Ayathrema (harvest) are the next 30 days ending with the thirtieth day of the seventh month (the 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 twentieth day of the tenth month, wherein the animal kingdom came into existence.

(f) Hamaspathmadema (equinoxial) is the last stage of 75 days ending with the fifth *Gatha* of the twelfth month. Man was created during this period. In all 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, in some central locality, where they would hold weddings, feasts and socialise generally.

Ceremonies

The Yasna, (Sanskrit Yajna or Yagna) is a prayer which includes the praise of God and His Spiritual Intelligence and invokes their aid. It is an extensive prayer with an elaborate ritual, in the course of which certain things are presented as symbols. Recital during the ceremony of all the 72 chapters, known as the “Has” of the Yasna, is an indispensable condition.

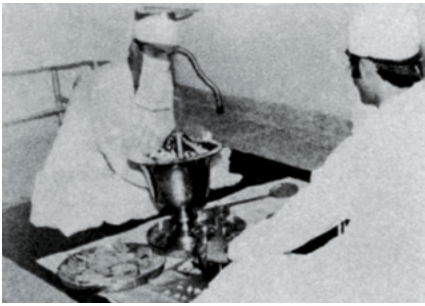
The Visparad is a form of prayer intended to celebrate the seasonal festivals; it is also a prayer wherein all the ratu or the chief or the best “ of creations are invoked. “The celebrations of the Visparad”, adds Dr. Modi, “should suggest to the celebrant the idea of ‘Excelsior’.” How is that state of “Excelsior” (the higher) to be attained? The reply given in the Visparad is:

“Zoroastrian Mazdayasnians, keep your feet, hands, and understanding steady for the purpose of doing proper, timely, charitable works, and for the purpose of avoiding improper, untimely, uncharitable works. Let industry be your motto here. Help the needy and relieve them from their needs!”

The Yasna

The Visparad

The Baj Ceremony



The Baj ceremony, forming part of the funeral services after death, is performed on various occasions in a Zoroastrian house. The first three days after death are the principal days when these ceremonies are performed. The subsequent occasions are Chaharum, or the fourth day, Dahum, or the tenth day, Siruz, or the thirtieth day, and Salruz, or the anniversary.

It is the duty of the son, or the nearest heir of the deceased, to perform the Baj ceremony, wherein certain items which serve as symbols of the different kinds of creation, such as animal or vegetable creation, are submitted as offerings, a tribute either to the glory of the particular Yazata or heavenly being, or to the memory of a particular, deceased relative.

The Afringan

Expressive of praise to God and the Higher Intelligences, the Afringan prayer corresponds to the Apei of the *Brahmins*. A fire is kept burning in a censer before the officiating priest and is fed with sandalwood and frankincense. The offerings consist principally of fruit, flowers, milk, water, wine and sherbet.

The Farokhshi



This prayer is intended to remember, invoke, and praise the Fravashis of the dead. Like the Afringan, it is generally recited over offerings such as fruits, flowers, milk, wine and water, and before fire. The Fravashi is that power or spiritual essence in a substance, which enables it to grow. It is the spirit inherent in everything, inanimate or animate, which protects it from decay and enables it to grow, flourish and prosper. Every object in nature is believed to have its Fravashi.

These Fravashis are a kind of prototype, and are analogous to the “ideas” of Plato who believed that everything had a double existence, in idea and in reality. According to the Fravardin Yasht, their number is legion, and they are spoken of as protecting and looking after the Vourukasha sea (Caspian). The same number looks after the constellation of Haptoirang (Ursa Major), the body of Keresapa, and the seed of Zarathushtra. As the universe is made of innumerable objects, animate or inanimate, large or small, and as each object has its own Fravashi, or some individual, inherent, spiritual essence which maintains and supports it, it is evident that there are innumerable such spirit essences, all emanating from the great Divine Essence of God who has created them, and who has made use of them.

Ahuramazda is the Great Architect of the universe. He is the Creator of the material as well as the spiritual world. The Fravashis form the creation of the spiritual world. In the spiritual hierarchy, they stand, as it were, fourth in the order of supremacy.

Ahuramazda (The Omniscient, Self-existent Lord) is at the head of all; next come the Ameshaspentas (The Bountiful Immortals), who are His own creations; then the Yazatas (i.e. those who are worthy of being worshipped); and the Fravashis (i.e. the guarding or protecting spirits).

Zoroastrianism preaches veneration for the dead. It is believed that the dead have a future existence somewhere and that there exists some relation between the dead and the living. The channel, through which the relation continues, is the Fravashi, or the guiding and guardianspirit of the dead, who come to the help of the living, provided they live a pure and virtuous life and hold the departed ones in veneration.

Farokhshi is the recital of the praise of these Fravashis in honour of the dead. It consists of the recital of the Satum prayer and the Fravardin Yasht. The offerings are the same as in the case of the Afringan.

This is a prayer in praise of the fravashis of the dead, generally recited over meals. The meal of the day is served in a tray and placed before the priest during its recital. The name of the dead, in whose honour it is specially recited, is mentioned first in a Pazand prayer.

The ceremony of feeding the Sacred Fire in a fire temple five times (gah) during the day varies according to the grade of the Sacred Fire. In the case of the Fire of the first grade, the priest must be one who has gone through the Bareshnum and has performed the Khub ceremony. After saying his prayers, he places some frankincense and six pieces of sandalwood over the fire in the form of a Machi, or throne. He goes round the censer with a metal ladle in his hand and standing in eight different positions, (the four sides and four corners) he recites different parts of a prayer, the substance of which is as follows: “Oh! God! We praise Thee through Thy fire. We praise Thee by the offering of good thoughts. We praise Thee through Thy fire. We praise Thee by the offering of good deeds. (We do all this) for the illumination of our thoughts, for the illumination of our words, and for the illumination of our deeds.”

Whilst uttering the words, “Dushmata, Duzhukhta, Duzvarshta” (evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds) during the recital of the first Nyaesh and the first Pazand portion thereof, the officiating priest rings the bell thrice within the holy precincts of the altar of Fire. Some priests ring the bell thrice, whilst uttering each word, to emphasize that portion of the prayer in which the worshipper expresses his determination to shun evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds.



Vendidad

This ceremony is usually performed after midnight, after a person's death. It consists of the recital of the 22 fargards of the Videvodat.

Satum

Gah



Boe-Machi



Boe Ceremony

The ceremonies for the consecration of the Sacred Fires of the second and third grades are similar, but simpler, and the number of different fires required for the purpose is smaller. The Boe ceremony for feeding the fires is also simpler.

The temples or buildings which hold the Sacred Fires, are consecrated with the recital of Yasna, Vendidad, Afringan and Baj prayers for four days.

Consecration Ceremonies

Consecration of the Sacred Fires and Fire Temples

There are three grades of Sacred Fires: (1) the Atash Behram, (2) the Atash Adaran, and (3) the Atash Dadgah. These three have their different rituals of consecration and also different rituals for the daily prayers during the five periods (Gah) of the day, when they are fed with fresh fuel.



Yezeshne

This is another important ceremony performed immediately after sunrise. The sacred *Hom* water is made during this ceremony.

Significance of the processes



Jashan

What does a Fire thus collected, purified, consecrated and enthroned signify? A Zoroastrian standing before the Sacred Fire thinks for himself: "When this fire in this urn before me, though pure in itself, though the noblest of the creations of God, and though the best symbol of the Deity, had to undergo certain processes of purification, had to have its essence, nay its quintessence of purity, drawn out to render itself worthy of occupying this exalted position, how much more necessary, more essential, and more important is it for me, a poor mortal prone to commit sins and crimes and to be contaminated with hundreds of evils, both physical and moral, to undergo the process of purity and peity, by making my Manasni, Gavasni and Kunusni (good thoughts, good words and good deeds) pass, as it were, through the sieve of peity, and separating by that means my Humata, Hukhta and Hvarshta (good thoughts, good words and good deeds) from

my Dushmata, Duzukhta and Duzvarshta (bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds), so that I may deserve an exalted position in the next world?"

The different varieties of fire are collected from the houses and places of business of men of different grades of society. They include even fire used in cremation or incineration, and the ceremony reminds a Zoroastrian that just as all the fires from the houses of men of different status have, by the process of purification, acquired without any discrimination an exalted place in the urn, so also before God men of all strata of society are equal, provided they pass through the process of purification and preserve purity of thought, purity of speech, and purity of action.

When a Zoroastrian goes before the Sacred Fire, the officiating priest holds before him in a ladle in his hand the ash of a part of the burning fire. The devotee applies it to his forehead, just as a Christian applies the consecrated water, and thinks to himself: "Dust to dust. The fire, all brilliant, shining, and resplendent, has spread the fragrance of the sweet-smelling sandalwood and frankincense round about, but is at last reduced to dust. So is it destined for me. Let me, like this fire, do my best to spread, before my death, the fragrance of beneficence and the light of righteousness and knowledge!"

In the centre of the spot chosen for the Tower, a priest performs the Baj ceremonies in honour of Sraosha, the guardian-spirit guiding the souls of the dead, of Ahuramazda, of Spenta Armaiti, the Ameshaspenta presiding over the land of Ardafravash, i.e. all the departed souls, and of the Haft Ameshaspenta, the seven Beneficent Immortals.

A few days later, two priests perform in the morning the Tana ceremony for laying the foundation of the Tower. The ceremony is so called, as a very fine thread (Tana) is used to mark out the circumference of the Tower and its different parts for laying the foundation. A hundred and one fine threads are woven into one strong thread or string. The thread so prepared is required to be long enough to go thrice round the circumference and the inner parts. Some time before its use, this thread is made "Pav", i.e. washed, purified and dried. To hold this thread, the priests have to drive into the ground 301 nails of different sizes and weights.

In the central well of the Tower, called the Bhandar, two priests perform for three consecutive days, the Yasna and Vendidad ceremonies in honour of the Yazata Sraosha who protects the souls of the dead for three days and nights after death. On the morning of the fourth day, the opening day of the Tower, a Yasna ceremony is performed in honour of Ahuramazda. Then the Baj and Afringan ceremonies are performed in honour of Ahuramazda and of Ardafravash, i.e. the



Boe

Consecration of the Towers of Silence



Jashan

departed souls of Spendarmad, i.e. the archangel presiding over mother earth, a portion of which is now occupied for laying out the dead, and finally of Sraosha. In the Afringan ceremony, also known as the Jashan ceremony, which is performed in the presence of a large number of the community assembled to witness it, the name of the donor at whose expense the Tower is built is mentioned and the blessings of God invoked upon him. When the ceremony is over, the Zoroastrians assembled throw into the central well of the Tower gold, silver or copper coins, or even rings and other ornaments which help to make up the sum necessary for building the Tower, if it is built at the expense of the community. If, however, it is endowed by a donor, the amount thus collected goes to the Head Priest of the district in whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction the Tower lies. Sometimes he donates it to charitable trusts of the town.

The Navjote The ceremony of investing a child with the sacred shirt, Sudreh, and the sacred thread, Kusti, is known as Navjote. A Zoroastrian is free to dress as he likes, but after initiation he must always, save while bathing, put on the Sudreh and the Kusti as symbols of his faith. The word Navjote means “a new invoker” and the ceremony is so called as it is only after its performance that a Zoroastrian child is under an obligation to offer prayers and to observe religious customs and rites.



The ceremony begins

The Navjote is usually performed when the child is seven. On the day fixed for the investiture, a few minutes before the time of the ceremony, the child is made to go through the Nahn (ablution) ceremony, and then taken to a room where friends and relatives and priests have assembled. There, the officiating priest sits with folded feet upon a carpet spread on the floor and the child is made to sit in front of him, with a sheet of white cloth round its body. The following articles are laid on the carpet: (1) a tray containing a new suit of clothes for the child, including a Sudreh and a Kusti; (2) a tray of rice, which at the end of the ceremony is presented to the family priest; (3) a tray of flowers which are presented at the end of the ceremony to the assembled priests, friends and relatives; (4) a lamp, fed generally with clarified butter; (5) fire burning on a censer with fragrant sandalwood and frankincense; (6) a tray containing a mixture of rice, pomegranate grains, raisins, almonds and a few slices of coconut, which are sprinkled over the head of the child by the priest whilst giving his benediction. In the first tray containing the suit of clothes there are also some betel leaves and arecanuts, a few pieces of sugar, a few grains of rice, a coconut, a garland of flowers, a metallic cup containing *kumkum* (a kind of red powder), and a few coins. These things are not necessary for the ceremony proper, but they are regarded in India as emblems of good luck, and as such are presented by the priest to the child. At the end of the ceremony the coins are given to the family priest as part of his fee.

When all the priests have taken their seats, the officiating priest places in the child’s hand a new shirt. They all then recite Patit, the atonement prayer, or the Hormazd Yasht. The child also joins in reciting the prayer or its selected sections; generally, he recites in its place the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer. The officiating priest then rises from his seat and the child stands before him.

The first part of the investiture consists in presenting to the child the sacred shirt. This prayer is made up of two parts; (a) the Avesta Khshnuman of the Yazata Din, who presides over religion, and (b) the Pazand formula of the Confession of Faith. The confession, made up of these two parts, runs as follows:

“Praised be the most righteous, the wisest, the most holy and the best Mazdayasnian Law, which is the gift of Mazda. The good, true and perfect religion, which God has sent to this world, is that which Zarathushtra has brought. This religion is Zarathushtra’s religion which Ahuramazda communicated to Holy Zarathushtra.”

When the child publicly makes this declaration of faith in the Zoroastrian Mazdayasnian religion, the priest clothes it with the sacred shirt. While putting it on, he chants the sacred formula of Yatha Ahu Vairyo, and the other priests join him. He then stands with the back of the child turned to him facing the east if it is morning, the west, if it is evening, then recites the introductory part of the Hormazd Yasht and the Nirang-i-Kusti. “The Omniscient Lord keeps back Ahriman powerless. May Ahriman with all his accomplices be smitten, vanquished, and dejected ! Oh! Omniscient Lord, I repent of all my sins; I repent of all the evil thoughts that I may have harboured in my mind, of all the evil words that I may have uttered, of all the deeds that I may have done. The propitiation of Ahuramazda and condemnation of Ahriman are the uppermost wish of those who work for the Truth.”

An elaborate process of girding the Kusti round the waist is then gone through. During the investiture of the sacred thread, the child recites, along with the officiating priest, the Nirang-i-Kusti, containing the last and the most important part of the Articles of Faith. (1) I have promised to remember Zarathushtra’s teachings and beliefs. (2) My struggle against evil is to be unending. (3) I will follow the path of Ashoi. (4) I will keep faith with the Lord. I ascribe all good to Ahuramazda. This is the creed of the Mazdayasnian faith.

At the conclusion of the ceremony the officiating priest makes a red kumkum mark on the child’s forehead—a long vertical mark if it is a boy or a circular mark if a girl—and places in his/her hands the coconut, flowers, and other articles mentioned above. There only remains then the recital of the Tan-dorosti or benediction by the officiating priest, who invokes the blessings of God upon the new initiate, in these terms:

“May you enjoy health, long life, and splendour of piety ! May the good Yazatas and Ameshaspentas come to your help! May the religion of



Declaration of faith



Covenant between man and God

Zarathushtra flourish! Oh, Almighty God! May you bestow long life, joy and health upon the ruler of our land, upon the whole community and upon this child! May the child live long to help the virtuous! May this day be auspicious, this month auspicious, this year auspicious! May you live for many a year to lead a holy, charitable, and religious life! May you perform righteous deeds. May health, virtue, and goodness be your lot! May all your good wishes be fulfilled by the Bountiful Immortals! Amen! Amen!"

The Navar One newly initiated into the work of offering prayers, rites, and sacred things to Ahuramazda is called Navar. The candidate for initiation must first pass through two bareshnum purifications. He is then initiated into the order by two priests. To qualify themselves for the performance of the ceremony, these priests have to go through the Gewra ceremony, which consists of the performance, for six mornings, of the Yasna ceremony. On the sixth day of the Gewra ceremony, the priest who has on that day performed the Yasna ceremony initiates the candidate. The neophyte takes his bath with all its formalities and puts on a new suit of clothes, and is led to the fire temple in a procession. In a thickly inhabited city like Bombay the procession is formed in the temple itself. The neophyte then puts on the full ceremonial dress, wears on his shoulders a shawl and carries a mace (gorz) as the insignia of dignity and authority. When the procession arrives at the place of initiation, the candidate removes his full dress, lays aside the insignia of authority and under the guidance of one of the officiating priests, presents himself before the assembly. The initiating priest then asks the assembly, "Is it your pleasure that this candidate may be admitted ?" After waiting for a few seconds for a reply, he takes the silence of the assembly to signify its will and consent, and expressing his pleasure gives his own consent. The candidate is then taken to the Yazishn-gah, i.e. the place set aside for the liturgical service, where he performs the Yasna ceremony and subsequently the Baj and Afringan ceremonies. These are repeated for four days. After this, he is declared qualified to be a priest.



The Navar and Murttab

The Murattab The priest who has gone through the Navar ceremony can perform only a few liturgical services; he cannot officiate at the higher services performed in the temples. In order to qualify himself to direct such ceremonies, he must go through the second grade of initiation and become a Murattab, that is, one who has acquired the rank (martabeh) of a director of the priesthood. In this ceremony the initiate goes through the bareshnum ceremony for ten days. On its termination, he performs the Yasna ceremony on the eleventh day. Thereafter, he is fully qualified to officiate as a directing priest at all the ceremonies.

The wedding ceremony consists of:

- (1) Preliminary benedictions.
- (2) Questions to the marrying couple and the witness
- (3) Joint address by the two officiating priests.

The senior priest blesses the couple in these words:

"May the creator, the Omniscient Lord, grant you a progeny of sons and grandsons, plenty of means to provide yourselves, abiding love, bodily strength, long life for a 150 years."

Thrice during the course of the benediction a declaration of the witnesses and of the bride and bridegroom is taken by the priest. The witness on behalf of the bridegroom's family is first asked:

"In the presence of this assembly that has met together in the city of. . . . on. . . . day of. . . . month of the year. . . . of the era of Emperor Yazdagard of the Sassanian dynasty of auspicious Iran, say, whether you have agreed to take this maiden. . . . by name, in marriage for this bridegroom, in accordance with the rites and rules of the Mazdayasnians, promising to pay her 2,000 dirams of pure white silver and two dinars of real gold of the Nishapur coinage." "I have agreed," replies the witness. Then the following question is put to the witness: "Have you and your family with righteous mind, and truthful thoughts, words and actions, and for the increase of righteousness, agreed to give for ever this bride in marriage to....?" He replies: "We have agreed."

The priest then asks the couple: "Have you agreed to enter into this contract of marriage (and abide by it) till the last day of your life, with a righteous mind?" Both reply: "We have agreed."

Then follows the recital of the Paevandanama, or Ashirwad, an address replete with benedictions, admonitions, and prayers by the two officiating priests who shower on the couple grains of rice as an emblem of happiness and plenty.

The Ashirwad is not merely a benedictory address; it is also a little sermon which closes with a short prayer. Likewise, the admonitory part of it is not merely a homily exhorting the bride and the bridegroom to cultivate good qualities, to do good and to shun evil; it is also a discourse for the entire assembly on worldly wisdom and a key to success in life. As an illustration, the following extracts may be noted:

"Do not quarrel with the revengeful. Never be a partner with an avaricious man. Do not be the comrade of a back-biter. Do not join the company of persons of ill-fame. Do not co-operate with the illinformed. Do not enter into any discussion with persons of bad report. Speak in an assembly after mature consideration. Speak with moderation in the presence of kings."

The Wedding Ceremony



The Groom



The Bride



Ceremony

“Oh, ye good men,” says the officiating priest, “may good accrue to you as the result of perfect good thoughts, perfect good words, and perfect good deeds! May that piety come to you which is the best of all good. May not sinful life, which is the worst of all evil, come to you. . . Righteousness is the best gift and happiness. Happiness to him who is righteous for the sake of the best righteousness!”

In the concluding paragraph of the Ashirwad the married couple is blessed in these terms:

“May they have light and glory, physical strength, physical health, and physical success; wealth that may bring with it much happiness, children blest with innate wisdom, a very long life and the blissful paradise, which is due to the pious! May it be so as I wish it!”

The Funeral Ceremony It will be convenient to treat the funeral ceremonies and observances under the following two heads:

- (1) Ceremonies relating to the disposal of the dead
- (2) Ceremonies relating to the soul

Disposal of the dead To maintain fire, air, water, and earth pure and undefiled is a cardinal principle of the Zoroastrian creed. It is enjoined that the body of a person after the soul has left it, should with due respect to the deceased be disposed of in such a manner as not to defile these elements or to injure the living. Accordingly, the followers of the creed do not burn or bury their dead, or consign them to the water. They merely expose the dead on the top of a high hill, to the heat of the sun, there to be devoured by carnivorous birds. Their funeral ceremonies are likewise based on the ancient Zoroastrian ideas of sanitation, segregation and purification. All the ceremonies of this order appear to have anticipated the prophylactic measures taken in modern times for the prevention of epidemics, namely, breaking the contact of the living with the real or supposed centre of infection, and destroying such a centre itself. As a matter of precaution, all cases of death are treated as infectious, and the followers of the faith are warned that they should bring themselves into as little contact as possible with dead bodies.

Soon after death, the corpse is washed and a clean suit of clothes is put over it. The Kusti, or the sacred thread, is then put around the body with a prayer. The corpse is placed on the ground in a corner of the front room on large slabs of stone, or impermeable, hard, dry clods of earth. The hands are folded upon the chest crosswise. After the corpse is placed on slabs of stone, one of the two professional corpse-bearers, to whom the body is entrusted, draws round it three Kashas, or circles, with a metallic bar or nail, thus reserving temporarily the marked plot of ground for the corpse so as to prevent the living from going near it and thus guard survivors against possible infection.

The dead body is then shown to a dog with two eye-like spots just above the eyes. It is believed that this particular kind of spotted (Chathru Chasma, literally, “the four-eyed”) dog has the faculty to detect whether life in the body is extinct or not. It is expected to stare steadily at the body, if life is extinct; but not even to look at it, if otherwise.

Fire is then brought into the room in an urn and is kept burning with fragrant sandalwood and frankincense. In front of the fire sits a priest who recites the Avestan texts till the time of the removal of the corpse to the Tower and keeps the fire burning. The corpse may be removed to the Tower at any time during the day, but not at night, as the body must be exposed to the Sun.

About an hour before the time fixed for the removal of the body to the Tower, two or, if the body is heavier, four Nassasalars, i.e. corpsebearers, clothed completely in white, enter the house. In the case of a death due to an infectious disease, all the exposed parts of the body, except the face, are covered up, so as to prevent infection through any uncovered part. They carry a bier, called Gehan, invariably made of iron, to remove the body. Wood being porous and, therefore, likely to carry and spread germs of disease and infection, its use is strictly prohibited in the funeral ceremonies.

The corpse-bearers place the bier by the side of the corpse. They then recite in a lowered tone the following formula of grace, and remain silent up to the time of the final disposal of the corpse in the Tower of Silence.

“(We do this) According to the dictates of Ahuramazda, according to the dictates of Ameshaspentas, according to the dictates of the Holy Sraosha, according to the dictates of Adarbad Maraspend, and according to the dictates of the Dastur of the age!”

They sit silent by the side of the corpse. If there is any occasion on which they must break silence, they do so in a subdued tone, without opening the lips.

Then follows the Gah-sarna ceremony, i.e. the recital of a portion of the *Gathas*, which is intended to be an admonition to the survivors to bear with fortitude the loss of the deceased. After this, the corpse is again shown to the dog; the relatives and friends, who have by this time assembled at the house, then have a last look of the deceased. After the Gah-sarna ceremony, the mourners pass, one by one, before the corpse, to have a last look and to bow before it as a mark of respect.

The corpse-bearers then cover the face with a piece of cloth and secure the body to the bier with a few straps of cloth. They carry the bier out of the house and entrust it to the Khandias, another set of corpse-bearers, who carry the bier on their shoulders to the Tower.

When the bier reaches the Tower, it is put on the ground outside; the corpse-bearers uncover the face, and those who have accompanied the funeral procession pay their respects and have a last look from a distance of at least three paces. After the dead body is once more exposed to the sight of the “four-eyed” dog for the last time, the gate of the Tower is opened.

The Nassasalars who took the corpse out of the house and have accompanied the corpse to the last resting place, now take over the bier from the carriers and take it into the Tower, placing the dead body on the space set apart for it. They then remove the clothes from the body of the deceased and leave it on the floor of the Tower. Naked one comes into this world; naked one leaves it.

The body is exposed and left uncovered, so that the eye of the flesh - devouring birds may be drawn to it. The sooner it is eaten up, the fewer the chances of further decomposition, and the greater the safety of the living. The clothes removed from the corpse are thrown in a pit outside the Tower, where they are destroyed by the combined action of heat, air and rain. In Bombay, they are destroyed with sulphuric acid.

On completing their work the corpse-bearers lock the Tower. Thereupon an attendant claps his hands as a signal to all those who have accompanied the funeral procession and who have by this time taken their seats at some distance from the Tower. They all get up from their seats and recite the rest of the Sraosha Baj prayer, of which, before joining the procession, they had recited only a part. This is followed by a short prayer, in which they say: “We repent of all our sins. Our respects to you (the souls of the departed). We remember here the souls of the dead who are the spirits of the holy.”

Ceremonies relating to the soul of the deceased

“O Ahuramazda, Beneficent Spirit, Holy Creator of the material world ! when a pious man dies, where dwells his soul for that night?. . . Where for the second night?. . . Where for the third night?” asks Zarathushtra in the *Hadokht Nask*.

Ahuramazda replies: “It remains at the place of his body, singing the *Ushtavaiti Gatha*, asking for blessedness: ‘Blessedness to him whom Ahuramazda of His own will grant, blessedness!’”

If it is the soul of the wicked man, it remains within the precincts of this world for three nights. Remembering all the sinfulness of its past life and feeling at a loss where to go, it clamours: “Oh, Ahuramazda! To what land shall I turn? Where shall I go?”

The soul of a dead person that thus remains within the precincts of this world is under the special protection of Sraosha, whom Ahuramazda has appointed to guard the souls of men during life and after death. The religious ceremonies for the soul of the dead during the first three days are, therefore, performed in the name of, or with the propitiatory formulae of invocation (Khshnuman) of Sraosha. The *Shayast-la-Shayast* enjoins: “During all the three days, it is necessary to perform the ceremony (Uazisn of Sraosha) because Sraosha will be able to save his soul from the hands of the Daevas during the three days; and when one constantly performs a ceremony at every period (Gah) in the three days, it is as good as though he should celebrate the whole religious ritual at one time.”

At the commencement of every Gah, two or more priests and the relatives of the deceased recite the Sraosha Baj and the formula of the particular Gah, and the Patit, or the penitence prayer with the Khshnuman of Sraosha. At night two priests perform the Afringan ceremony in honour of Sraosha. They sit on a carpet face to face with an altar of fire and a metal tray between them. The senior priest, who has the tray before him, is called the Zaoatar, or invoking priest. The other who has the altar of fire before him is called the Atarevaks, or the nourisher of fire. The metal tray contains a pot of pure water and a few flowers.

The Zaoatar begins the Afringan, invoking in the course of the introductory portion, which is composed in the Pazand language, the protection of Sraosha upon the soul of the deceased who is specifically mentioned by name in the prayer. Both the priests then recite together the seventh section of the Sraosha Yasht which sings the praises of the Yazata for the protection it affords. Besides these prayers and ceremonies which are performed for three days and nights at the house of the deceased, the Yasna litany, and sometimes, the *Vendidad* with the Khshnuman of Sraosha, are recited at an adjoining fire temple for three successive mornings and nights.

In the afternoon of the third day, a ceremony is performed, called the Uthamna, before an assembly of friends and relatives of the deceased and a few priests. The special prayers prescribed for this period of the day, namely, the Sarosh Hadokht and the Patit, are recited, as also a Pazand prayer with the Khshnuman of Sraosha, wherein the name of the deceased is mentioned and the protection of Sraosha is implored for him. This is an occasion for announcement of charities. At the end of the ceremony, the relatives and friends of the deceased generally announce donations to charity funds in the Niyat, or memory, of the deceased.

The Uthamna

The Parsi priesthood

The first of the four classes of Iranian society consisted of the priests. They were called Athravans because their chief duty was to tend the fire. Athravan literally means the protector of fire, and the word is derived from “Atar”, meaning fire.

“The high estimation in which the priestly class was held among the ancient Iranians, is to be seen from the fact that Athravan is one of the titles assumed by Ahura Mazda himself,” says Dastur Dr. Dhalla in his *Zoroastrian Civilisation*. The high priest ranked second to the king in the empire. The head of the Zoroastrian priests of all Iran was called Zarathushtratema, or the most supreme Zarathushtra. In his capacity as teacher, the priest was known as Aethra-paiti, that is, master of knowledge.

The chief characteristics and also the qualifications of a priest were: living on simple and light fare, contentment and patience, uprightness of character and the embodiment of holiness and of religious power. In fact, an Athravan was one who invested a child with a sacred shirt and girdle, celebrated marriages and recited the final prayers over the dead. He was a sacrificer in the Fire Temple, a cleanser of the defiled, a healer of the sick, an exorciser of evil powers, an interpreter of dreams, a reader of stars, an educator of youth, an administrator of justice, a scribe at the Royal Court and the counsellor of the king.

The chief means of livelihood of the priests occupied with ceremonial functions came from the fees received from the laity for the performance of sacrificial rituals. The family priests received alms on festivals and on other auspicious occasions. The food and clothing consecrated for ceremonial purposes formed another source of income for the priests. The farmers, making the offering of the first crop of the season to the genius of culture, gave the consecrated grain to them. The physicians who healed the sick, and the cleansers who purified the defiled, were specially enjoined to charge no fees for service to the priests, but to heal them solely to receive their blessings.

During the Sassanian period, the word used for the high priest of the first order was Magopatan-Magopat. Subsequently, it became Mobedan-Mobed, which still further became Dasturan-Dastur in modern times. In fact, all these titles amounted to the highest office amongst the clergy, known amongst Roman Catholics as the Pope and in the Greek Church as the Patriarch. In the Zoroastrian prayers, known as Aafrins, a distinction is made between Ervadan, Mobedan and Dasturan. Ervadan applies to Ervads, who are a priestly class who pass through certain purificatory ceremonies, known as Navar and Murattab. Only those sons of priests who have passed one of the above two

examinations, along with the appropriate ceremonies, have the right of putting on the white turban, commonly used by all the priests and Dasturs amongst the Zoroastrians. They can perform the thread ceremony, the wedding ceremony as also the ceremony for the dead. They can participate in the Jashan ceremony.

Mobedan applies to Mobeds or priests who, besides passing through purificatory ceremonies that the Ervads undergo, have to go through a special ceremony known as Bereshnum, which alone entitles them to perform higher ceremonies such as Yasna, Vendidad and Baj, apart from the ceremonies for investiture, marriage, death and Jashan.

Dasturans are the Dasturs who have control over the Mobeds who are guided by the former and who carry out all religious instructions they give to them. During the Sassanian period, the high priests became Prime Ministers, Ambassadors, Chief Justices, religious teachers, writers of books on religious and philosophical subjects and holders of high titles. In fact, the high priest of King Shapur II, most famous in the Zoroastrian History of the high priests, and known by the name of Adarbad Maraspend, was the Prime Minister in his kingdom.

When the Sassanians came to power, the Avesta, the sacred language of Zoroastrianism had long ceased to be a living tongue. The daily prayers continued to be recited in the defunct language. Need was evidently felt to supplement the Avestan prayers by some additional prayers in the vernacular. Dastur Adarbad Maraspend, therefore, composed such supplementary prayers in Pazand. His example was followed by other Dasturs. Several benedictory thanksgiving and expiatory prayers, composed during the Sassanian period, have come down to us, and are recited as supplementary to the Avestan prayers, up to the present day.

Among the Dasturan-Dasturs, mention has already been made of Dastur Meherji Rana of Navsari, who visited the court of the great Moghul Emperor Akbar. In the year 1771, that pioneer of Iranian studies, Anquetil du Perron, published his volumes containing the first European translation of the Avesta, which he had studied for six years under Dastur Darab Suhrab Kumana, the leader of the Kadimi sect at Surat.

During the 19th century the great Dasturs of India who wrote numerous books came from the Sanjana and Jamaspasana families of high priests. For instance, Shams-ul-Ulema Dastur Dr. Peshotan Byramji Sanjana, M.A., Ph.D. (Turin), published eight volumes of the translation of the *Dinkard* which is considered a scholarly work. For his great learning he was decorated with the Shams-ul-Ulema (the sun amongst the learned), the first Parsi to get this distinction. He was also the first Parsi high priest to be elected a member of the German Oriental Society in 1864. Dastur Dr. Jamasji Minocherji Jamaspasana, M.A., Ph.D. (Turin), DDL (Oxon), published a Pahlavi dictionary, which attracted considerable attention among the savants of Europe. Shams ul-Ulema

Dastur Dr. Darab Peshotan Sanjana, B.A., Ph.D. (Germany) has also to his credit important publications of volumes 10 to 19 of the *Dinkard*.

To usher in a revival of higher ideals among the Parsi priesthood, a Parsi philanthropist, Mr. Merwanji Muncherji Cama, established a trust, some 41 years ago with a sum of Rs. 2.5 million and opened a boarding school of Theology, at Andheri, a few miles from Bombay. The result of this endowment was that with the knowledge imparted at the seminary, these young aspirants to the Parsi priesthood turned out to be superior to the sons of priests who were taught at home (by their fathers or uncles) in the orthodox way. The priests taught in the traditional way could get no better status or correspondingly higher emoluments for their services under the Panthakys. The word “Panthaky” is derived from the word “Panthak” which means control and supervision over a certain number of families, in a certain area, for whom the priest was bound to carry out all ceremonies on auspicious or mournful occasions.

When the sons of the priests came out of the seminary, with a better knowledge of religion, having spent five to seven years on their study, and found that neither the Panthakys nor the laity considered them in any way better than the illiterate sons of the priests (taught at home and who understood precious little of the religion), they began seeking service in business houses, banks, and elsewhere. The deplorable result of these events was that when the family of the founder, the late Mr. Merwanji Muncherji Cama, found that the number of boys wanting to take advantage of the seminary was greatly diminishing, they were disheartened. They approached the courts to get the trust reduced by almost a million and half rupees, utilising the rest for other communal purposes. Thus, a grand and sound scheme ended in disillusionment, while the average Parsi priest, known as Mobed, still remains where he was a thousand years ago.

Further, it is a well-known fact that amongst the Parsis, and Hindus, only the son of a priest can become a priest. In exceptional cases, a brilliant son of a priest can be a Dastur. Generally, the Dasturship is hereditary, so that the sons of the laity can never hope to enter the Parsi priesthood. And yet, as we have seen, after the advent of the British, and with English education which Parsis assimilated, some of them—though not the practising priests—have rendered a far greater service to the community by their scientific learning and knowledge of religious lore, than some of the high priests themselves. A brilliant instance is that of the late Mr. Cursetji Rustomji Cama, who for his learning and character was called by the late Professor James Darmesteter of Paris “Le Dastur Laique” (the layman Dastur).

Not being content with having studied his religion under European scholars, Cama started classes to encourage young Parsis, most of whom were the sons of priests. They studied their religion under him in the light of European scholarship aided by philological research. He had

the satisfaction of seeing some great Parsi scholars acquire a reputation, in the community and outside, for their scholarship in the Zoroastrian religion. Among these may be mentioned Ervad Sheriarji Dadabhoy Bharucha, one of the most brilliant pupils, Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga, Tehmuras Anklesaria, Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, Dastur Dr. Dhalla and others. All these scholars rendered a very distinct service to the study of Zoroastrian religious literature.

Jivanji Jamshedji Modi was born in Bombay at Colaba on 26th October 1854. He was the son of a practising priest; and instead of taking up his father's profession, he preferred to join Elphinstone College, where he took his B.A. degree in 1877. He also joined Mulla Feroze Madressa and Sir Jamshedji Jeejibhoy Madressa, where special training is given in the ancient languages of Avesta and Pahlavi, along with knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion. After graduating from these Madressas, he studied French and German, and then began his life's career. He began writing papers on historical and religious subjects and shed a flood of light on these questions with his very extensive reading.

When he went to Sweden to attend the 8th Congress of Oriental Scholars held at Stockholm, he created such a favourable impression with his scholarship that the King of Sweden awarded him the Diploma of Letteris et Artibus, with a Gold Medal as its insignia. For his continuous scholarly work, his writings and his valuable books, the Government of India conferred upon him in 1893 the title of Shams-ul-Ulema. His general lectures and sermons amongst the Parsis and public would be numbered at about 500. For all these learned activities, the University of Hiedelberg conferred upon him the honour of its Doctorate (Ph.D.).

Amongst the Dasturs, Shams-ul-Ulema Dastur Dr. Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt. enjoyed the highest respect and regard for his vast learning and unimpeachable character. Dhalla very firmly, but politely, refused to perform ritualistic ceremonies such as Jashan, Vendidad, Nirangdin, Baj, Afringan etc. and declined to interfere with or share in, the income of the Panthakys, who generally are under the supervision of a Dastur. This he did, because he firmly believed that too much importance was given to the ceremonial part of the religion, by the Parsis, whereas the teachings of Zarathushtra laid special stress on the good actions of mankind which alone were responsible for a just reward in the next world. Dhalla's theme in all his speeches and writings was, that while certain ceremonies, which have become a part and parcel of the Zoroastrian religion were permissible, the majority of the community, through sheer ignorance, believed that the greater the number of ceremonies performed by the priests, the more would be their chances of securing a seat in heaven after death. He, therefore, continued to preach to his co-religionists that it would be far better if all the millions of rupees spent on religious ceremonies every year were diverted to worthier causes such as education, health and other social needs of the community. These advanced views on matters, religious and social, were not readily accepted by a vast majority of the orthodox Parsis in India.

His life was spent in writing books, preparing lectures and sermons, giving interviews to seekers after knowledge on religion and in establishing social institutions, beneficial to the cause of the Parsi community. He wrote numerous books such as the Zoroastrian Theology, the Zoroastrian Civilisation, Whither Bound Mankind, the History of Zoroastrianism, Homage unto Ahuramazda, Our Perfecting World, Atma Katha (Autobiography) and many others. Dastur Dr. Dhalla, 25 years after he had left Columbia as a student, was invited back to America to receive the degree of Doctor of Literature (D. Litt). of this University.

Glossary

AESHMA: Demon of Wrath and Bloodthirstiness generated by evil men when making the wrong moral choice between the Twin Mainyu.
AHU: (a) Spiritual Lord and Master. Works with the Ratu or Prophet to protect and nourish the Creation, (b) Spiritual Existence or being, one of the parts of the human body.
AHUM BIS: Dual life, two lives, or physician of life.
AHURA: Lord of Life, the Living One.
AHURA-MAZDA: Lord of Life and Wisdom, the Great Creator.
AIRYAMNA: Friend, the third of the three grades of Zarathushtra's disciples.
AIRYANA VAEJA: Land of the Aryans.
AJYAITI: Absence of life, spiritual death, generated by the Evil One of the Twin Mainyu. Opposite of GAYA.

AKEM: The Bad, epithet applied to the Evil One of the Twin Mainyu.
AKO MANA: Evil Mind being the collective evil minds of evil men who labour under the influence of Druj.
AKO MAINYU: Spirit of Evil, generated by the Druj.
AMERETAT: Immortality. Twin of Haurvatat. Given as a reward to man at the conclusion of a Good life lived on earth.
AMESHASPENTAS: Bountiful Immortals (Asha-Vahishta, Vohu-Manu, Kshathra Vairya, Spenta-Armaiti, Haurvatat and Ameretat). The six attributes of the Lord.
ANAGHRA RAOCHAO: Heavens of Boundless Light, the last of the four Heavens described in Pahlavi literature. Identified with Garo Demana.
ARMAITI: Divine Devotion, firm, unflinching faith in the love of God.
ASHA (ASHOI). Divine Law and Order, Righteousness, Truth, Holiness.
ASHAVANTS: Followers of Ashoi (Asha).
ATAR: Flaming Fire of Thought implanted in every man, his intellectual honesty. Closely associated with Manangha, the Pure Mind. Upholds Ashoi (Asha), works with Spenta Mainyu to discriminate between the Ashavants and Dregvants, and is the invisible Divine Power sitting in judgement at the Trial by Ordeal.
BODY (HUMAN): Made up of nine parts according to Yasna 55.1: three purely gross or material, three a mixture of the gross and the subtle, and three purely spiritual.
PARTS: (a) Purely Material:
Gaeta, The Primal Elements;
Tanu, the entire physique, the person;
Astavant, Azdi or the bony substance including flesh, blood and tissues;
(b) Mixture of the gross and the subtle: (astral)
Ustana, the life breath;

Kehrp, the form outline, hence the subtle body beneath the fleshy covering;
Tevisi, Desire for Perfection, the upward striving faculty in man which reaches towards perfection;
(c) Purely spiritual:
Baodaieh, the discerning intellect;
Urvan, the soul;
Fravashi, the element of God, the Pure Spiritual Essence in man, described in the Fravardin Yasht as a mysterious, inconceivable, incorruptible, limitless, allpervading universal Divine Light of vast and farillumined vision (Fravardin Yasht, 30, 32, 34). It arises from Ahura Mazda's two intimate Powers, Spenta Mainyu, His Holy Spirit, and Vahishta Manu, His Sovereign Mind. (His Good Mind).
The Fravashi is an ideal which the soul must endeavour to emulate. It shows the soul the heights it can aspire to and be one with God. In later times, two more faculties were added, to the purely spiritual parts, Ahu, spiritual existence or being; and Daena, visionary perception, thus bringing the total number of parts in the body to eleven.

CHINVAT: Bridge of Judgement, or discriminative choice between good and evil. According to Pahlavi tradition, for the righteous dead this bridge becomes a broad, smooth path for them to traverse and reach Garo Demana. For the wicked dead the bridge turns into a razor's edge from which they fall into the abyss below.
CHINVATO PERETU: Bridge of the Separator.
CHISTI: Ray of Perceptive Wisdom which illumines the whole mind.
HU CHISTI: The Good Chisti, so described when God's Holy Wisdom is meant.

DAENA: Used in the following varied senses:
(a) Visionary perception in man;
(b) Divine Revelation;
(c) Faith, religion, the Zoroastrian faith being called 'Daena Vanguhi', the Good Religion;
(d) Conscience in man, good or evil;
(e) Character and conduct, behaviour good or bad.

DAEVA: Polytheists, black magicians, evildoers in general who were hostile to Zarathushtra's teachings.
DAXHYU: The country, the last of the four regional groups into which society was divided in Zarathushtra's day.
DEMANA OR NMANA: House, home, the first of the four regional groups into which society was divided in Zarathushtra's day.
DREGVANTS: Followers of the Druj. Always contrasted with the Ashavants. Mankind divided by Zarathushtra into these two categories, Ashavants and Dregvants.
DRIGHU: The poor, the needy, and the oppressed, bearing the additional sense of the poor in spirit, the meek and lowly of heart, denoting especially those who take upon themselves voluntary poverty in order to become selfless devotees of Ahura Mazda.
DRUJ: Lie, Deceit, Falsehood, Untruth, originating in the dual nature of the human mind and the wrong moral choice of the

individual between the Twin Mainyu, See Y. 30. 1 - 11 ; and MAINYU (TWIN). The Druj was personified in later Avestan writings as a foul, stinking hag, a female demon.

DRUJO DEMANA: House of the Lie, the Zoroastrian conception of Hell where the wicked dead dwell in 'a murky glow' and with 'woeful wailings' eating the wormwood and gall of their own thoughts and acts because they 'fouled' their 'original lustre'.

DURAOSHA: Death-dispelling, an epithet applied to Haoma.

GARO DEMANA: House of Heavenly Song, the Zoroastrian conception of Heaven, synonymous with the Light, the Abode of Ahura Mazda, the Ashavants and the Magas.

GAUSH BAGHA: Lord of Creation, i.e. Ahura Mazda.

GAYA: Life, generated by the 'better' of the Twin Mainyu.

GUESH TASHA: Architect of Creation. Considered by some to refer to Ahura Mazda and by others to a separate Divine Power of that name.

GUESH URVA: Soul of Creation (Mother Earth).

GREHMA: 'Devourer of Sacrifice'. False spiritual guides.

HAOMA: Sacred plant whose juice is used in Zoroastrian ritual to this day.

HAURVATAT: Perfection. Twin of Ameretat. Given as a reward to man at the conclusion of a spiritual life lived on earth.

KARAPS OR KARAPANS: Sacrificial priests among the Daevas, hostile to Zarathushtra's teachings.

KAVAYAS OR KAVIS: Ruling princes in Zarathushtra's day who sided with the Karapans against Zarathushtra.

KHURSHED PAYA: Heavens of the Sun where good deeds dwell, the third of the four Heavens mentioned in Pahlavi literature. The Gathic equivalent of Khurshed Paya is Havare Pishyasu.

MAGAS: Magi, master-adepts in the things of the Spirit, leaders and initiators in the Zoroastrian Mysteries, and the Judges at the Trial by Ordeal.

MAH PAYA: Heavens of the Moon where good words dwell, the second of the four Heavens mentioned in Pahlavi literature.

MAINYU (TWIN): Twin Spirits or Mentalities, through the parable of which Zarathushtra explains the dual nature of the human mind and the origin of evil.

MANANGHA: The Pure Mind, to be distinguished from Vohu Manu, the Good Mind, and Vahishta Manu, God's Sovereign Mind. Closely associated with Atar.

MANTHRA: The Holy Word through which the act of Creation took place (Y. 31.6 and 7), and also the Word of Salvation.

MAZDA: The Great Creator, Wise Lord.

MAZDA AHURA: The Great Creator, Lord of Wisdom and Life. Phrase occurs twice in the plural when it means Mazda Ahura and the sum total of His Powers.

NMANA: See DEMANA

ORDEAL: (Fire and Molten Metal). Earliest legal system round which the Gatha community centered its religious and social laws. Presided over by the Magas, and made use of to judge avengers and criminals. Atar said to control the Ordeal and separate the Ashavants from the Dregvants with the help of Spenta Mainyu.

PATI: Overlord of the regional groups into which society was divided in Zarathushtra's day.

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RATU: Temporal Lord and Master, King, Prophet, but literally, the very essence of a thing, all living creatures, including plants, having their own 'ratu'.

SAOSHYANTO: The Future Saviour of Mankind destined to crush Aeshma. The word has a future participle and is used both in the singular and the plural by Zarathushtra who prays that his blessings may rest upon one and all the Saoshyantos who are to follow him. Those to come are said to be of Zarathushtra's seeds.

SATAR PAYA: Star-studded Heaven where good thoughts dwell, the first of the four Heavens mentioned in Pahlavi literature.

SHOITHRA OR ZANTU: Province, the third of the four regional groups into which society was divided in Zarathushtra's day.

SPENTA MAINYU: Holy Spirit closely associated with Vahishta Manu, Ahura's Sovereign Mind, these two being the most intimate of His Powers. Leads man to salvation and works with Atar to separate the Ashavants from the Dregvants.

SRAOSHA: Divine Obedience. The archangel who stands between God and man. He interpreted God's message first to Zarathushtra.

TEVISI: Desire for Perfection. Twin of Utayuiti. Closely linked with Haurvatat. One of the nine parts of the human body.

UKSHANO ASNAM: Refreshers of the Days. Literally, 'the light of days' or 'the increasers of the days'. The phrase occurs once in the plural, Y. 46.3, and once in the singular, Y. 50.10, where it refers solely to the dawn. No explanation of the phrase is given in the Gathas, but, judging from Y. 46.3, it may refer to the harbingers of a new dawn of the spirit.

UTAYUITI: Desire for Immortality. Twin of Tevisi. Closely linked with Ameretat.

VAEPAYA: Paederast. Occurs once.

VAHISHTA MANU: Ahura's Sovereign Mind, which with Spenta Mainyu constitute His two most intimate Powers. Protects man from all evil and leads him to salvation.

VAHYO: The Better, epithet applied to the benevolent one of the Twin Mainyu.

VEREZENA: Fellow-worker, the second of the three grades of Zarathushtra's disciples.

VIS: Town, the second of the four regional groups into which society was divided in Zarathushtra's day.

VOHU MANU: The Good Mind, the most frequently mentioned of the Divine Powers together with Asha. Protector and nourisher of Creation which is described as 'the Beloved of Vohu Manu' (Y. 48.6) leads man to the ecstatic beholding of Ahura, perfect illumination being 'the life of Vohu Manu' (Y. 43.1) and protects the just from all harm.

XSHATHRA: Ahura's Might and Majesty, His Kingdom and Power, the most fiery of the Divine Powers which strikes at the root of all evil, destroys the Druj, and sets the just man upon the righteous path.

SVAETU: Strong in Spirit, the first of the three grades of Zarathushtra's disciples.

XVANIRATHA: One of the seven regions of the earth lying in the centre.

XVRENA: Glory, radiance.

YAZATA: Personified Divine attribute, usually translated as Angel.

ZARATHUSHTROTEMA: Supreme Head of Religion.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

*If I could reach out to the skies, I would inscribe in gold thy names
across the shining blue vaults of yon Heaven.*

DR. MARTIN HAUG,
Professor of Sanskrit & Comparative Philology
University of Munich

The Sacred Language, Writings & Religion
of the Parsis. London-1878.

*In thy simple words Zarathushtra's divine Laws and Truths were unfolded.
Hail to thee Herr Doktor.*

REV. DR. LAWRENCE H. MILLS,
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An Exposition of the Lore of the Avesta.
Oxford-1916.
Zoroaster and the Bible. London—
Our own Religion in Ancient Persia. Oxford
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*Though a Christian, thou art more Zoroastrian than a Zarthosti.
The emotions herein shown are thine.*

DR. E. W. WEST,
Professor of Oriental Studies
Oxford University.

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DR. IRACH J.S. TARAPOREWALA,
Professor of Sanskrit & Indology
Tehran University

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*Thy words bring solace to the heart and peace to the mind.
One a Zoroastrian poet laureate, the other one of its finest Scientific Theologian.*

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Zoroastrian Theology. New York-1914
Zoroastrian Civilisation. New York-1922
Homage unto Ahuramazda. 1943

in Zarathushtra's truths, thy words remain ever-fresh.

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*.... and then I saw the Fravashi in all its crimson glory and beyond
just a beckoning distance away stood a gentle shimmering presence...my soul.*

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Just two little pages, but thine was the inspiration.

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The Religion of the Good Life. London-1938.

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Message of the Gathas. Calcutta-1971
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Atharvan Zarathushtra—the foremost Prophet.
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An extra hail to thee. Professor.*

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Havovi..... the questioning mind

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without her it would never have been completed
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but do not stop. I am sure your book will be different and it will be good."

Lady Hirabai Cowasji Jehangir

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Phyllis, Shernaz
Gulshan, Darius, Viraf,

These mothers and their children are my critics and my audience.
They are the Lost Generation but they also represent the hope of the future

Michaelangelo
Buonoratti



Forgive me

In sincere gratitude



The Holy Bible

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The Gates of Ahuramazda's Heaven are open to all Righteous Souls

I HAVE A DREAM

...AND THIS IS THE BEGINNING

