

INTRODUCING PROPHET ZARATHUSHTRA

Zarathushtra, the Prophet of ancient Iran, according to some scholars, was born in Adarbaijan, West of Media. As to when he lived, scholars are unable to fix the exact date. Some put him as early as 6,000 B.C. and others as late as 600 B.C. All the same there can be no doubt that with one step he crossed a decisive stage in the history of human thought.

His life's work began at the age of thirty; at forty-two he converted King Vishtaspa and his Court in Bactria in Eastern Iran, propagated the faith as far a field as China and died a violent death in the Fire Temple at Balkh when aged seventy seven.

The only authentic documents on the life and teachings of Zarathushtra are the "Gathas", which were composed by the Prophet with occasional verses by his disciples. The following notes embody his fundamental teachings and beliefs and are very briefly stated for all those who wish to walk "in the green pastures of the Divine Law and the Good Mind." They are presented here in abridged form and are based on Chapter V of "The Religion of Man" by the late Rabindranath Tagore, the world-renowned poet and philosopher of India.

1. Morals and Monotheism

Zarathushtra was the first Prophet who gave a definitely moral character and direction to religion and at the same time preached the doctrine of monotheism which offered an eternal foundation of reality and goodness as an ideal of perfection.

2. Freedom of Choice

He was the greatest of all the pioneering Prophets who showed the path of freedom to man, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from the blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions, the freedom from multiplicity of shrines which draw the worship away from the single-minded chastity of devotion.

3. Value of Religion

Though surrounded by believers in magical rites, he proclaimed in those dark days of unreason, that religion has its truth in moral significance and not in external practices of imaginary values; that value of religion lies in upholding man in his life of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

4. Religion is Knowledge

There are probably not many religions of so high antiquity in which we find the doctrine that religion is knowledge or learning, a science of what is true, as precisely declared in the tenets of the Gathas. It is unbelieving that are unknowing; the believers are learned because they have penetrated into this knowledge.

5. Moral Code of More Importance than Rituals

In Zarathushtra's teachings, which are best reflected in his Gathas, we have hardly any mention of worship. Conduct and its moral motives have received almost the sole attention.

6. Divine Illumination

Truth which filled the mind of Zarathushtra was not a thing which he borrowed from books or received from teachers; he did not come to it following a prescribed path of tradition, but it came to him as an illumination of his entire life, almost like a communication of his universal self to his personal self.

7. Emancipation of Religion

The consciousness of God transcends the limitations of race and gathers together all human beings within one spiritual circle of union. Zarathushtra was the first prophet who emancipated religion from exclusive narrowness of 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.

8. Zarathushtra addresses to the whole World

Zarathushtra's voice is still a living voice, not alone a matter of academic interest for historical scholars who deal with the facts of the past; not merely for the guide of a small community of men in daily details of life. Rather of all teachers Zarathushtra was the first who addressed his words to all humanity regardless of distance of space or time.

9. Righteous Path

The ideal of Zoroastrian Persia is distinctly ethical. It sends its call to men to work together with the Eternal Spirit of God in spreading and maintaining the Kingdom of Righteousness against all attacks of evil. This ideal gives us our place as collaborators with God in distributing His Blessings over the world.

10. Unrealised Ideal is Dangerous

Everywhere in the world, the unrealised ideal is a force of disaster. It gathers its strength in secret even in the heart of prosperity, kills the soul first and then drives men to their utter ruin. When the aggressive activity of the will, fails to accept the responsibility of its ideal, it breeds unappeasable greed for material gain. In the end amidst a raging conflagration of clashing interests, the tower of ambition topples down to dust.

11. Love of God through Service to Mankind

Therefore, we must heed the prophetic voice of Zarathushtra reminding us that all human activities must have an ideal goal, which is an end to itself and is therefore peace and immortality. It is the House of Songs, the realisation of love that comes through strenuous service of goodness.

"All the joys of life which Thou holdest, O Mazda, the joys that were, the joys that are, and the joys that shall be, thou dost apportion all in Thy love for us."

“THE GOOD AND THE EVIL”

By
Cyrus P. Mehta

At Celebration of World Religions
Golders Green Unitarian Church
Hoop Lane London NW.11

Sunday, May 29th, 1977

The standard by which we judge what is good and what is evil, what is virtue and what is vice has been varying from age to age, from country to country and from one community to another. As such we hear about many ethical theories based on major world religions or associated with the names of various thinkers and philosophers. This morning it is not my intention to speak about Zoroastrian ethics or examine and compare them with others. Whatever our religions or beliefs, so far as human behaviour is concerned we are all agreed that to love one another is much better than to indulge in hatred and good thoughts, words and deeds are better than evil ones.

By and large we are agreed that if mankind is to make progress then individuals must make efforts to develop certain qualities of mind and heart, viz. truthfulness, honesty, purity, contentment, fortitude, tolerance, detachment, service, humility, generosity, and last but not least the quality of love, love for all animals and protection of their lives, love for all God's creation and the love of God himself. These have been preached from many a pulpit for thousands of years; only man has been very slow in acquiring these qualities of mind and heart.

Let us now consider the subject proper of "The Good and The Evil". No one can deny that the most bewildering problem of life is that of the existence of evil. There is a bright as well as a dark side to creation; man too has his noble as well as ignoble side. An inescapable dualism besets nature. All is not right with the universe, nor is it wrong. With much that is good in it, there is a good deal of evil which cannot be ignored or explained away as

'maya' or illusion. Nor can evil be tolerated in the spirit of a fatalist as a decree of Providence. The solution of the problem of evil has been attempted by every Prophet. So this morning I will present to you briefly Prophet Zarathushtra's contribution on this baffling subject.

Zarathushtra made ASHA or Righteousness the very keystone of his teachings. To him ASHA meant the Eternal Law which impels all creation to progress Godwards. He enjoined on his followers to be active participants on the side of ASHA. Consequently all that helps the forward progress of humanity is Good; all that tends to hinder it is Evil. It is in that light that we have to evaluate various qualities of mind and heart I mentioned earlier on. These qualities help us on the path of progress; their opposites or negative ones do not help. Hence the latter constitute evil. And these other negative qualities which we should avoid are anger, hatred, greed, pride, arrogance, craving for money and power and a life devoted to pursuit of sensual pleasures.

Prophet Zarathushtra's ideal of ASHA (Righteousness) was beautifully summed up by Poet Tennyson, when he wrote:-

**"That God, who always lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves."**

Now Zarathushtra's concept of creation is closely linked with his solution of the problem of evil. In his songs the Gathas at one stage he says:-

**"Since O Mazda, from the beginning Thou didst
fashion for us physical bodies, discerning souls and
directive intelligences through Thy Mind; since
Thou didst infuse life-breath into mortal bones,
since Thou didst grant us capacities to act and true
doctrines to guide so that one could choose beliefs at
will."**

So we see that Gathic view of creation emphasises free will. The Prophet then explains the origin of evil by using the parable of Twin Mentalities. These Twin Spirits or Twin Mentalities are described as "Vahyo" the better and "Akem" the bad. They represent the condition good and evil in human nature. They are the twin aspects of human mind and have no meaning apart from its workings and the moral choice of the individual. When a man exercises his "better mind", he creates "Gaya" or life and attracts himself to God and His Powers. When he exercises his evil mind, he generates "Ajyaiti" or the absence of life, that is moral death.

It may be asked why did Ahura Mazda (God) create the potentiality for evil in so frail a creature as man? The answer is again to be sought in that insistence on freedom of choice which is so marked a characteristic of the Gathas.

This freedom is the very essence of God's Scheme. Nature as personified by the Soul of Creation is qualitatively different from Ahura and necessarily imperfect, even as man is. Both must come to realise the highest truth and highest beauty of the spirit, destroying all imperfections in the ecstatic beholding of Ahura "in purest essence and vision". But such a beholding can never be forced, for Ahura, who is pure Spirit, desires His creatures to come to Him of their own free will, knowledge and love. If we reflect a little we will see that evil serves a useful purpose. It enables us to strengthen by learning to overcome it. Life is not merely strenuous effort to be good but also for the purpose of fighting and overcoming evil. Evil succeeds because good people stand by and do nothing.

Complete freedom is left to the individual to choose his own side in the eternal battle of good and evil. A Zoroastrian is required to stand on his own legs. No one can intercede for him or bear his burden. The Zoroastrian term for soul is "Urvan" which literally means "the chooser"; for it is that within the human being which enables him to choose between right and wrong, between the temporary and the eternal. Once the choice is made, the Eternal Law comes into operation. A man shall reap exactly as he sows.

So we see that both the principles of good and evil are incessantly at work in man as well as in creation; and the story of their conflict is the story of the world. In this conflict man is a co-worker on the side of God. Life becomes a crusade against the forces of evil and imperfection. During this process social wrongs have to be adjusted; social justice has to be rendered; society as a whole has to be regenerated; the world has to be redeemed.

Let me conclude by saying that man's duty is linked with the question of his place in the universe, viz. whence he has come and wither will he go. The highest objective in life for man is to find God. This can only be done by means of Godliness - **that is constant remembrance of God.** When one is in His presence, all evil, pain and vices cease to exist. Where you pray, how you pray are determined by worldly conditions and considerations. The important point is continuous remembrance. God keeps calling out "Come unto Me", but man chooses to ignore the call. Only when the Son returns to the Father, can he have lasting peace.

Such bliss can be achieved because though Good and Evil spirits are opposite forces, they do not have equal value. Good is positive and Evil is negative and at the time of reckoning, the positive prevails over the negative. Thus love overcomes hatred and truth defeats falsehood. Truth and falsehood may not be said to be equal in value, for while truth is one, falsehoods are many. Falsehood presupposes the existence of truth - just as a false coin presupposes the existence of a genuine coin. But truth is never, never dependent upon falsehood. Truth shines in its own glory.

Likewise evil by itself does not or cannot exist. It is relative depending upon the distance from God at which an individual stands upon the Path of Asha (Righteousness). As soon as he comes in the presence of God - all evil vanishes; hatred is converted into Love.

This happens to be so because Ahura Mazda (God) is the source of the universe and though both good and evil forces came into being at the dawn of creation, God himself remains a positive being.

Good spirit is more intrinsic to God than the evil spirit. Evil spirit is a negative force, merely a passing show. Therefore we must see the sun behind the cloud and be ever optimistic. Evil is there for a purpose - to ensure that we walk on the path of righteousness by our own inclination and choice.

This then is the Zoroastrian point of view on the subject of "The Good and The Evil".

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Notes

1. The time allocated to me for the address was 10-12 minutes and it was therefore not possible to do full justice to the subject.
2. After the service, some one approached me with the query, whether God created both good and evil spirits. I explained to him that Gathas are not written in the form of a systematic text like Gita. The scholars were not unanimous in their translations and whether "the two spirits were created by Mazda" was a disputed passage. Hence one could not be too sure on this point and for that reason in my address I merely said that the two spirits came into existence at the dawn of creation.
3. It is often asked whether Zoroastrianism is a dualistic religion. Our reply should be in negative. We do not believe in two Gods, one God of Good and the other God of Evil. Ours is a pure monotheistic religion and the duality or the so called duality is an ethical one and not theological.
4. In a truly "Dualistic" system, the two spirits could be said to be "self-created", "co-eternal" and "co-equal" powers, one good and one evil who are at war with each other.
5. In its long history, Zoroastrianism has always maintained the end of the conflict and the victory of "good" over "evil". If therefore one of the powers in a "Dualistic" system is to perish, the two powers cannot be co-eternal.
6. The two spirits are not "self-created" as may be expected in a truly "Dualistic" system. For both these emanate from and are creation of Ahura Mazda (God). Many find this concept difficult to understand and accept. Professor Jackson - a renowned scholar of Zoroastrianism - explains the twin spirits as follows:

"They do not exist independently but each in relation to the other; they meet in the higher unity of Ahura Mazda. They exist before the beginning of the world, but their opposition comes to its expression in the world that we see."

Please preserve this copy and pass it on to others who are interested in the study of Zoroastrianism. I do not claim special scholarship but I am a Zoroastrian and if in some small measure I can preserve my Zoroastrian Heritage, I am content that I have done my duty.



REFLECTION

Some one asked philosopher Bertrand Russell whether he would die for his beliefs. He replied, "Certainly not, I may change them."

My reflection was "Cyrus, God is not interested in your beliefs. He is more interested in your Good Thoughts, Words and Deeds."

What is yours?

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A CELEBRATION OF WORLD RELIGIONS

**Golders Green Unitarian Church
London NW. 11
Sunday 8th June, 1980**

"THE HUMANITY OF GOD"

As seen by

Cyrus P Mehta

Opening Sentence spoken after lighting a candle:- "The Divinity of God is the Drama of Eternal Triangle of Rejection, Acceptance and Anticipation."

Age after age when the wick of righteousness burns low, a Redeemer comes once again to rekindle the torch of Love, Truth, and Brotherhood of Mankind. In the Gathas - the Songs of Prophet Zarathushtra - we find the Soul of Mother Earth complaining to God:

**"Wherefore Ye gave me birth?
Who fashioned me?
Passion and rapine outrage everywhere
And violence enmesh me all around;
No other help than Yours I see
Reveal to me a Strong One who can save."**

In response to that appeal the world saw the advent of Prophet Zarathushtra some thousand of years ago in ancient Iran. After him other Saviours took birth at different times to give the world a spiritual push. All preached the same message of Love, Truth and Brotherhood of Mankind. What is now required of us is to live that message in our daily lives rather than to talk about it.

God has revealed His Divinity in the past and will do so again. Unfortunately the person who reveals that divinity is rejected in his own times and much later mankind accepts him as a Saviour and a new religion is established in his name. In due course of time when spirituality is at a low ebb mankind anxiously awaits for some one to be born and set matters aright for the world. But when that person arrives, only a few recognise his divinity and the majority reject him at least in his own times. Thus the drama of Rejection, Acceptance and Anticipation of God's Divinity goes on all the time.

In order to understand God who cannot be seen with gross eyes, Zarathushtra devised his unique method of understanding God through His six divine aspects; namely, Good Mind, Best Righteousness, Supreme Authority, Holy Devotion, Perfection and Immortality. In later times his followers compiled a list of 101 names of Ahura Mazda or God.

.By taking up each individual name and meditating on it one can form certain mental pictures. Let us take the name "I am Existence itself, the one and only Reality". When we meditate on it we think of all human beings, the world of birds and insects, of life and death on earth and the transitory nature of all such existence. We then realise how helpless and illusory our existence is in contrast to the existence of Power that rules and regulates the whole Universe.

.Let us consider another name, "God is Omnipresent". Here we close our eyes and think of God as being present in every little creation of His - in man, in animals, in a giant oak tree, a rose petal or a butterfly. If we accept that God works within all of us we soon realise the folly of hating any one. For to hate any one is tantamount to hating God.

Let us pass on to another name, "God is Omniscient". Everything occurs in this world according to His design and therefore it is inevitable that everything should be known to Him. From this it follows that none can conceal anything from Ahura Mazda (God)

and none can deceive Him. Yet there are some who think they can do wrong and get away with it. No one does and the wrong doer eventually pays the price. Goodness is the reward for goodness and wickedness is the reward for wickedness. This is the Divine Law and it works with great exactitude.

This kind of meditation is known to the Buddhists and the Hindus as "meditating with the seed", the seed being the subject of the meditation. I am happy to say that both Islam and Zoroastrianism are akin on this subject. In Quran we find the four attributes of Rabb - the Creator, Rahman - the Beneficent Lord, Rahim - the Merciful Lord and Malik-i-Youmidin, the Owner of the time of Requital. The Holy Quran has ninety-nine names of Allah such as Al-Hakim, "the ever wise", Al-Ghani - "One who is above every need", Al-Halim, "the Meek", Al-Wadood, "The Loving" and so on.

The advantage gained by meditating on the names of God is that we come to understand that He does not rule the Universe by chance or whim but everything is regulated and there is a scheme in which each form of Creation however insignificant plays its assigned part. It is by this process of spiritual advancement — through Universal Love, Humility and Devotion that a man can build a better world for himself and others and reach the ultimate goal of God Realization.

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THE HUMANITY OF GOD:-APPENDIX 1.**NAMES OF AHURA MAZDA - (GOD)***(From Hormuzd Yasht)*

O Holy Zarathushtra! my first and foremost name is 'I am', my second is 'Of a Flock', my third 'Omnipresent', fourth 'Best Righteousness', fifth 'All goodness arising from Mazda-made holiness', sixth 'I am wisdom', seventh 'Wise', eight 'I am learning', ninth 'Learned', tenth 'I am prosperity', eleventh 'Promoting', twelfth 'Lord', thirteenth 'Most profiting', fourteenth 'Free from harm', fifteenth 'Invulnerable', sixteenth 'Reckoning the deeds of the living', seventeenth 'Omniscient', eighteenth 'Blissful, nineteenth 'I am creating, and twentieth 'I am All-wise'.

101 NAMES OF AHURA MAZDA (GOD)

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|---------------------------------|--|
| 1.Worshipful or adorable | 19.Cause of all causes |
| 2.All powerful | 20.Benefactor |
| 3.All knowing | 21.Helper |
| 4.Master of All | 22.Dispenser of equitable justice |
| 5.Without beginning | 23.Sustainer |
| 6.Without end | 24.Protector of Creation |
| 7.Root of Creation | 25.Unchanging |
| 8.Final End | 26.Formless |
| 9.Great Cause | 27.The Firmest amongst the firm |
| 10.Best of All | 28.Invisible |
| 11.Purest of pure | 29.Omnipresent |
| 12.Above all | 30.Most Supreme |
| 13.In tune with all | 31.Worthy of Praise |
| 14.Unfathomable | 32.All helping |
| 15.All understanding | 33.Best Auspicious 'Khoreh' |
| 16.Most Righteous | 34.Compassionate |
| 17.All controlling | 35.Destroyer of Evil |
| 18.Without cause | 36.Immortal |

37. Granter of Wishes
38. Creator of Good Nature
39. Benevolent Judge
40. Generous
41. All bestower
42. Unconquerable
43. All energetic
44. Saviour
45. Undeceiver
46. Undeceivable
47. Without Dualism
48. Master of His Will
49. His Will is Law
50. Unique
51. All remembering
52. Reckoner
53. Omniscient
54. Fearless
55. Above Suffering
56. Most glorious
57. The Same
58. Creator of the Astral World
59. Creator of High Spirituality
60. Hidden in Spirituality
61. Maker of smoke (gas) by fire
62. Maker of vapour (water) by fire
63. Maker of fire out of gases
64. Maker of water out of vapour
65. Maker of ashes (earth) out of gas
66. Maker of air and earth
67. Maker of fire out of stone
68. Creator of wind
69. Creator of water
70. Creator of fire out of earth (as in a volcano)
71. Creator of gas out of earth
72. Creator of water out of earth
73. Great artificer
74. Granter of wishes
75. Creator of mankind
76. Creator of entire Creation
77. Creator of four elements of nature
78. Creator of constellation of stars
79. Above doubt
80. The Ageless
81. Eternally awake
82. Ever Alert
83. Careful progressor
84. Just
85. Victorious
86. Master of Creation
87. Lord of Life and Wisdom
88. Lord of Creation from time unknown
89. The great rejuvenator
90. Lord of the Universe
91. All Giver
92. All Kindness
93. Lord of Life
94. Forgiver
95. Creator of justice
96. Resplendent
97. Brilliant
98. Dispenser of justice
99. Master of Righteousness
100. Resurrector
101. Ordainer of transformation from human to the Divine

I may mention that it is up to individuals to meditate on different names and find their own meanings. The very process of contemplation is beneficial and sometimes the answer comes in a flash rather than working out through logical process of thinking.

Also please refer to “The Humanity of God” — Appendix 2 for additional guidance.

YASNA 43.15 (USHTAVAD GATHA)

Mentions Meditation

I realized you to be divine indeed, O Ahura Mazda when good thoughts entered within me pointing out that silent meditation is the best for the growth of soul.

Never let the leader placate the followers of falsehood for they regard the righteous always as their enemies.
(T. R. Sethna)

Thou art Divine, I know, O Lord Supreme, since Good found entrance to my heart through Love. This taught me that for steady inner growth Quiet and Silent meditation is best. No leader should compromise with False ones who think the Righteous are their foes.
(J. S. Taraporewala)

I did indeed comprehend Thee, O Ahura Mazda, as Bountiful, when (Thy) noble Divine Intelligence completely overwhelmed me (and) instructed (me that) silent thought contemplation (is) best for (the) Soul's intellectual growth.

A strong man perfect (in Divine Intelligence) shall not be one who appeases (those who are) wicked, as indeed Thy righteous adherents consider (the wicked) always (as the) brood of evil.
(Framroze Rustomjee)

THE HUMANITY OF GOD" - APPENDIX 2

When we pray and appeal to 101 Names we feel they are Amesha Spentas in charge of the portfolios. It is not so. Ahuramazda is divisible and indivisible. When He is divisible, He looks after all the 101 aspects as stated in 101 names. When he is indivisible, He is one whole and we address Him as Ahuramazda.

Divisible and indivisible, makes no difference. It is for the sake of humanity that He is divisible. You can contact Him through any one aspect. If kindness to animals appeals to you, you may reach Him through kindness to animals. Any one aspect that appeals to you and you adhere to, will enable you to reach Ahuramazda and His mysteries; in other words Wisdom of Ahuramazda.

The 101 names of Ahuramazda are very powerful. For ages, the followers have chanted them and it must create force, strength and power. This power drawn from the Accumulated Power Station must pulsate the atmosphere surrounding the individual when he chants the 101 names. The Atmosphere around him gets surcharged. Do not just be content in living in that atmosphere and enjoy the peace it creates for you. Use the surcharged atmosphere for healing, for creative work. It is actual power. Use it for a purpose. If you light a fire and then do not cook your food it will just burn and then when you extinguish, it will stop burning. But while it is burning, you can cook a meal and put it to use. Similarly when you ignite the inner fire with the chanting of 101 names you create blessings and a blissful atmosphere. Utilize the atmosphere thus created for a purpose, a mission. Direct it, channelize it to a useful purpose. Do not waste power. Use it for research, for healing, for creative work, for straightening out problems. Use the power thus created.

THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF ZARATHUSHTRA

*(A talk given by Mr. Cyrus P. Mehta on the occasion of
"Zarthostno Diso" - the Anniversary of the Death of the
Prophet Zarathushtra at Zoroastrian House, London
on Sunday, 6th June 1976.)*

Last month, we had the good fortune of listening to two young speakers in this hall.

Mr. Khojeste Mistry — a scholar in the making — gave us a very interesting talk on the Fundamentals of Zoroastrianism.

The second speaker was Brahma Kumari Sister Jayanti. In inspiring words, she presented to us Raja Yoga and how it can help us in communing with God and thus obtaining Self Realisation and God Realisation.

The first speaker presented to us the oldest Monotheistic religion in the world; the second a new movement of our times for a spiritual regeneration of mankind.

I asked myself if these two were totally unrelated subjects or whether there was a link and this link is to be found in the "Gathas" of Zarathushtra. Here we find several passages or verses clearly dealing with communion with Ahura Mazda, Self Realisation and Meditation as a means of achieving them.

God is not merely there so that we can offer Him our daily prayers and thanks. Every religion enjoins that we develop a relationship with Him. This relationship has to be elevated to the highest possible plane - where we look upon him as our Father, Friend and Guide and where we seek and commune with Him. There are about 25 verses in the "Gathas" bearing on this vital subject.

Raja Yoga draws its inspiration from the "Bhagwad Gita". We could derive the same from the "Gathas". "Gita" and "Gathas" reveal the same truths; the difference is in the terminology and presentation.

Today's subject as announced in the Notice is "Life and Teachings of Zarathushtra". Zarathushtra's life is well-known to most of you so I will not go into details but select some incidents in his life which could have some allegorical and moral meaning. If we can connect the story of Zarathushtra with his teachings, we would make the learning easier and also remember them.

It is related that six attempts were made to kill Zarathushtra when he was an infant. All of them were made by one Durasorb, an evil minded priest.

In the first attempt Durasorb tried to kill the baby Zarathushtra by stabbing him but his uplifted arm became paralysed. Durasorb is the symbol of evil who tried to gain mastery over Zarathushtra but Zarathushtra's gentility served as the most effective weapon to defeat the evil purpose of Durasorb. Humility and simplicity can triumph over the destructive weapons and the purpose of a wicked power. In "Sarosh-Hadokht" Yasht we find this injunction of Ahura Mazda - "O Zarathushtra! Humility is the best virtue for the world."

In the second attempt a mother cow stood guard over the infant Zarathushtra and saved him from being trampled down. The cow is symbolic of mother earth which nourishes us all. To Zarathushtra the earth was fruitful and productive. Mother earth can become a delightful place to live in if we can remove the dangers of famine and pestilence. One third of humanity lives on a starvation diet. Yet men care not about the soil, its conservation and growing more food. We must look after the elements of nature and make the mother earth more fruitful.

In the third attempt the leading horse stood guard over the baby Zarathushtra so that other horses racing through the wicket may not trample and kill the child. The horse is a symbol of man's "activity" and "acumen" (meaning perception, penetration, understanding). Man's mental and physical activity will do the same for him as what the horse did for baby Zarathushtra.

The four legs of the horse denote the four Divine attributes of "Vohu Mano" (Good Mind), "Asha Vahista" (Best Righteousness), "Kshthra Vairya" (Divine Power) and "Spenta Armaiti" (Love and Devotion). Every human being possesses these attributes and they have to be developed to the fullest in order to withstand all attacks of "Ako-Man" (the Evil Mind).

In the fourth attempt we are told that the baby Zarathushtra was placed near a den of wolves in order to be torn to pieces.

The wolves symbolise the cunning and crafty people in the world whose purpose is to destroy the good creation of Ahura Mazda. The story tells us that the wolves stood riveted to the ground. They did not turn back. This would indicate that a holy person not only defends himself from the wiles of the wicked but also removes the evil from within them. The two she goats that nourished the baby Zarathushtra are the powers of good mind (Vohu Mana) and God's immutable Law of Righteousness (Asha Vahista) that stand by an individual as the greatest nourishers and comforters in the midst of travail and distress.

In the fifth attempt baby Zarathushtra is thrown on the burning fire but no harm came to him. Here the holy fire in the body of Zarathushtra cools the unholy fire lit to burn him and the smouldering heap appears as cool as the bed of roses.

In this world man is eternally beset with the passions and desires for worldly things but when these are checked by being brought into contact with a pious being, then the fires of passion, desires and vices begin to lose their fervour. This enables man to overpower his own lower nature that is within him.

Finally in the sixth attempt we are told that Zarathushtra was ill and evil minded Durasorb had put poison in his medicine. Zarathushtra by his divine intuition suspects foul play and throws away the medicine offered to him.

In Zoroastrianism there are two kinds of wisdom. The first is the inborn wisdom (Asno Khratu) and the second is acquired wisdom (Gaoshosruto Khratu) and it is possible for man to develop both of these wisdoms so that even whilst in the midst of worldly activities he is in constant touch with Ahura Mazda whose guidance is more reliable than any that a man can think of.

As today's talk has to be short I cannot deal with the incidents of adult life of Zarathushtra. We may take them up on another day.

Let me conclude by saying that Zarathushtrian religion is a beautiful religion. It requires deep study, great fervour and passion. Esoteric study will reveal the power and force behind it. It is only after you know a person fully that you admire him and his qualities. When you know your religion fully, both the inner and outer aspects, you will begin to understand, appreciate and admire the wealth there is in Zoroastrianism.

We are not here in this world for nothing. The preservation of life with all its comforts is not the aim. The aim is to understand the responsibilities of life and carry them out in Ahura Mazda's name.

REPENTANCE IN ZOROASTRIAN PRAYERS

Cyrus P Mehta

The Parsi Zoroastrian word for worship is *Bandagi*, which means service. It is a comprehensive term including the notions of adoration, thanksgiving, pledge-making, devotion, self-dedication and repentance.

In this short article I propose to deal with this aspect of repentance, as it forms an important part of our daily prayers and also prayers recited for a deceased person at the time of or consequent upon death.

As the *kusti* prayer is the most frequently recited by any pious Zoroastrian, let me quote the portion dealing with the profession of repentance appearing in the *Hormazd-khodae* section.

"O Ahura Mazda our Lord! From all my sins do I turn back and I repent. From every evil thought, evil word, and evil deed which in this world I have harboured in mind, which I have uttered and which I have committed, or which from me has gone forth or whose origin I have been; of all such *sins against thought, word and deed pertaining to my body and pertaining to my soul*, pertaining to this world or to the world of Spirit - from all such sins with a contrite heart repenting with a triple - pledge do I turn back."

(Dr.I.J.S. Taraporevala's translation)

This passage is also to be found in other prayers such as the *Nyaishes* and at the beginning of some *Yashts*. It will be noticed that 'sins against thought, word and deed pertaining to my soul' are not enumerated though adults should realize what they are. Without venturing into details, it could be said that three evils of the body are murder, theft and adultery; four evils of the tongue are lying, slander, abuse and gossip; three evils of the mind are covetousness,

hatred and anger. At least twenty grades of sin are listed in our repentance prayers; some idea of these may be gathered from the second chapter of the *Minu-i Khirad or the Book of the Spirit of Wisdom*.

In Christianity the Ten Commandments form the basis on which a Christian may lead a good life. In the Catholic Church there exists the practice of Confession whereby a practising Catholic makes confession before a priest who hears it and gives advice; for atonement he may prescribe a necessary number of certain prayer lines which are readily understood by the penitent. Some among us, through lack of knowledge about our own religion (as practised in the past) have unkindly commented on this practice.

As most Zoroastrians pray in the morning, they never get the chance of praying the *Gah of Uzayeirin* (mid-afternoon to dusk). If one takes the trouble to look up its translation, reference is there made to the ritual functions of eight *ervads* or priests to whom particular duties are assigned for these ceremonial purposes. They are (1) *Zaotar*, who supervises the principal religious ceremonies, (2) *Havanan*, who performs the haoma ritual, (3) *Atarevakhsh*, who kindles the fire and keeps it alight, (4) *Frabaretor*, who arranges the sacred requisites for the ritual purpose, (5) *Aberetar*, who fetches pure spring or well-water for religious baths or for other religious purposes, (6) *Asnatar*, who administers the purifying bath (*nahan*), and also washes the *alats* required for ritual purposes, (7) *Rathwishkar*, who arranges the purified *alats* in their prescribed order and (8) *Sraoshowarez*, being the priest before whom confessions are made.

All these specialized grades of priests are described as Righteous *Ratus* or Righteous Teachers, and are venerated as such in the *Uzayeirin Gah* prayer. When Zoroastrianism was the State religion of Iranshahr (Iran) such confessions were made in public.

There are three Repentance or *Patet* prayers to be found in most Zoroastrian prayer books in common use by the community. They are (1) *Patet Avestani*, (2) *Patet Pashemani*, and (3) *Patet Ravani*. The first is the shortest of the three, and consists of repentances of a general nature without detailing sins of omission and commission, and a declaration to practise Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds and shunning Bad Thoughts, Bad Words and Bad Deeds.

The second and third *Patets* are longer and practically the same. The difference is that the second is recited by a contrite Zoroastrian seeking absolution, and the third is recited by a priest or a relative offering penitence *on behalf of* a deceased Zoroastrian.

My plea to fellow Zoroastrians is to examine and take stock of the contents of the *Patet Pashemani*. It contains a range of sins which no balanced person would dream of committing. There is obviously no point in confessing to sins which have not been committed. One of the sins mentioned is the *speaking ill of the dead*, and yet no sooner is a person deceased than a priest or kinsman recites the *Patet Pashemani* as though the dead person had committed every manner of sin, some even meriting death during the supposed sinner's lifetime! Stretching belief beyond all reason, we even find sins meriting death ten, a hundred and a thousand times over!

It is a sad feature of our communal life that the majority merely babble prayers without understanding or comprehension of what they uttered. As Zoroastrianism makes strong appeal to Reason and Good Sense, let us all make this brave and truthful resolution: "Henceforth I will not say our prayers in their original languages until I understand what they mean." It is only if and when we do this that we will be using our discerning mind as enjoined by our Prophet Zarathushtra.

**"Hear with your ears, the Highest Truths I preach,
And with illumined mind weigh them with care,
Before you choose which of two paths to tread,
Deciding man by man , each one for each,
Before the great New Age is ushered in
Wake up, alert to spread Ahura's word."**

*(Gatha Ahunavaiti 3.2/ Yasna 30.2
Dr. I.J.S. Taraporevala's translation)*

For those who can read Gujarati, I would recommend the "Khordeh Avesta ba maini" by Ervad K.E. Kanga. Apart from translations it contains explanatory notes. This book is not readily available to the public, but most of our community libraries may or should stock it. Another book is "Khordeh Avesta" (Zoroastrian Prayer Book with Prayers in Roman Script and Translation in English by T.R. Sethna of Karachi.) This is an excellent book containing explanations of certain socio-religious questions in addition to translations and a key to pronunciation.

From the above passage of the Ahunavaiti Gatha, we can see that we are asked to discover Truth for ourselves, and at every stage of our existence we have to choose — "which of the two paths to tread"; that of Ignorance or that of Enlightenment.

**"Dark is the mind of those that cling to False,
But brightly shines the mind that holds to Truth."
(Last sentence of Gatha Ahunavaiti 3.4/Yasna 30.4)**

Hundreds of years after Zarathushtra, Buddha expresses the same sentiments in an expanded form, and I conclude this article with his words:

"Do not believe in what you have heard; do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Do not believe in anything because it has been rumoured and spoken by many; do not believe because of some

written statement of some old sage; do not believe in conjectures; do not believe in that as truth to which you have become attached by habit; do not believe merely on authority of teachers and elders; after observation and analysis when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then do you accept it and live up to it."

("Kalma Sutta of Buddha")

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THE KISSEH-I-SANJAN

This Talk was first given under the auspices of the North London Zoroastrian Association (NOLZA) on Sunday, 5th October, 1986, at Walk-In Centre, 42, Turnpike Lane, London N.8.

Subsequently it was also given at the Zoroastrian Youth Conference held under the auspices of the World Zoroastrian Organisation, on Sunday, 6th September, 1987, at "Zoroastrian House", 88, Compayne Gardens, London, NW6.3RU.

Cyrus P Mehta

What is "Kisseh-i-Sanjan"? It is a written account of 864 lines dealing with the migration of the Parsi forefathers from Iran to India. It was written in Persian verse by a Parsi Priest Behman Kaikobad Sanjana of Navsari in 1600 A.D.— nearly 800 years after our forefathers settled in Sanjan.

Most of the knowledge about the migration and the early history of the Parsis in India are based on this account. Along with it we have inherited Parsi folklores, some of which were incorporated in Gujarati Garbas about which I will speak later on.

The first English translation of the "Kisseh" was made in 1844 by Mr. E.B. Eastwick and was published in the first volume of the Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. A more correct version in Gujarati had been printed with other pieces by Dastur Framji Aspandiarji Rabadi in 1831. A third rendering in English was made by Mr. S.H. Hodivala, one of our renowned scholars in 1920. My talk this evening is based mainly on Mr. Hodivala's translation of the "Kisseh" and a book called "Early History of the Parsees in India!" by Mr. R.B. Paymaster.

So let us go back into history and start with the last days of the Sassanian Zoroastrian Empire which survived from 226 A.D. to 651 A.D.— a period of 425 years. The first monarch of the Sassanian

dynasty was one Ardeshir Papakan and the last Yezdegard III (also known as Yezdegard Sheriar) who came to the throne in 632 A.D. The first Arab invasion of Persia took place in the year 633 A.D. under Khalif Omar. Iraq was then part of the Persian Empire and it was the first province to be lost to the invading Arabs. However, in the following year it was regained by the Persians. It was a critical victory but unfortunately the Persian General Behman Jaduyeh did not follow up his advantage and destroy the Arab army.

Persia at that time was divided into two political factions, one led by Rustam-bin-Hormazd, the Chief of the Persian Army and other by Prince Firoze. Behram Jaduyeh thinking that the Arab invasion was over and not wanting to be a passive spectator in the power-struggle within the country marched with his men to the support of Rustam-bin-Hormazd, the Army Chief.

This gave the Arabs time to regroup and reattack Persia. The Persians suffered heavily and lost the two great battles — the Battle of Quadeysyeh in 636 A.D. and Nehavand in 641 A.D. The ill-fated Yezdagard III was treacherously killed at Merv a few years later and the Sassanian Empire ceased to exist in 651 A.D.

Iran became the dominion of the Arab Caliphs and the new Islamic religion was imposed upon the vanquished people. History of Iran after the conquest from the middle of the 7th century to the beginning of the 9th century has not been properly recorded. But it is certain that over a period there was persecution of the Zoroastrians, destruction of their fire temples and forceful conversions.

Many among the Zoroastrians refused to surrender their noble faith, abandoned their homes and withdrew to the mountains of Khorasan. They were able to stay there for about 100 years but once again persecution compelled them to seek refuge elsewhere. One band of Zoroastrians came to the port of Hormuz where they stayed for 15 years and finally sailed to India, landing at Diu at the southern

extremity of the Kathiavad peninsula of Gujarat province. Here they remained for 19 years.

It is not clear why they abandoned Diu and took to their ships and sailed for Gujarat. We are told that whilst on sea, a disastrous storm overtook them. The people of Good Faith in their hour of trial prayed to Ahura Mazda, promising that if they survived the storm, as soon as they reached Hind, they would kindle a great fire to Behram. Their prayers were answered. A prosperous gale began to blow and the contrary wind ceased. Providence so ordered and the small band of faithful landed at Sanjan.

The Zoroastrian exodus from Iran raised several historical questions, but none can be answered with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. In which year did the Pilgrim Fathers set sail from Hormuz? Was there a single migration? How many men, women and children were among the first batch of refugees to come to India? What is the date of the first landing of the Parsis on the soil of India?

Up to 1870, the Parsis believed that they came to Sanjan in 716 A.D. and Iranshah Atash Behram installed five years later in 721 A.D. But subsequently our scholars including K.R. Cama have discovered that some mix up of dates has occurred in relating the Hindu Samvant dates to Parsi Shenshahi Calendar.

If we take the evidence presented in the "Kisseh-i-Sanjan", we arrive at a much later date than the traditional 716 A.D. Let us start with the 651 A.D. as the date of the final downfall of the Sassanian Empire. Add to it 100 years as period of stay in Khorasan, another 15 years as period of stay in Hormuz, another 19 years as period of stay in Diu. This gives us the date of arrival in Sanjan as 785 A.D. Let us now turn our attention to the account of the interview with Jadav Rana, the Hindu King, on the conditions made for allowing them to settle in his country and subsequent permission to build our

first Atash Behram in India. I will first relate the account according to the "Kisseh-i-Sanjan" and thereafter according to a Gujarati Garba. The latter version is short but perhaps more colourful.

An Account of Arrival in Sanjan according to
"Kisseh-i-Sanjan"

In that region was a virtuous Raja who had opened his heart to holiness. His name was Jadi Rana; he was liberal, sagacious and wise. A Dastur renowned for learning and prudence went to him with gifts and invoked blessings upon him and said, "O Raja of Rajas, give us a place in this city; we are strangers seeking protection who have arrived in thy town and place of residence. We have come here for the sake of our religion, for we heard that there was in this place a Raja descended from the beneficent Shillahras, ever renowned throughout Hindustan, who gave people shelter in his own town and kingdom and regarded them with the eye of compassion. We were cheered by these tidings and have approached thee under favourable auspices. We have now reached thy city in the hope of escaping from the Miscreants".

The hearts of all the followers of the virtuous Raja were gladdened and their souls charmed by these words. But when the Prince beheld them, a terror suddenly fell upon his heart. Fears for his own crown entered his mind and he thought that they might lay waste his kingdom. Frightened by their dress and accoutrements, he requested the Dastur about their religious mysteries.

"O thou devout Dastur", he at last said, "Tell us, first of all, the gist of the matter. What are the customs of your creed, which of them are open and which concealed? Let me first of all see what your beliefs are and we will then arrange for your residence here. Secondly, if we give you shelter, you must abandon the language of your country, disuse the tongue of Iran and adopt the speech of the realm of Hind. Thirdly, as to the dress of your women, they should wear garments of those of our females. Fourthly, you must put off

all your arms and scimitars and cease to wear them anywhere. Fifthly when your children are wedded, the marriage knot must be tied at evening time. If you first give a solemn promise to observe all this, you will be given welcome in my city." When the Dastur heard all this from the Raja, he could not help agreeing to all his demands.

Then the old Mobed addressed him thus, "O sagacious King, hearken now to what I say of our Creed. Do not be heavy hearted on our account, for never shall any evil deed proceed from us in this land. We shall be friends of all Hindustan and everywhere scatter the heads of thy foes. Know then for certain that we are the worshippers of Yazdan (One God) and have fled from the Miscreants only for our religion's sake. We have abandoned all we possessed and borne many hardships on the road. Houses and mansions and goods and chattels we have all forsaken, O auspicious Prince. We strangers are of the seed of Jamshid and revere the Sun and the Moon. Three other things also out of Creation, we hold in honour, viz. the Cow, Fire and Water. Thus we adore Fire, Water, Cows and the Sun and Moon likewise. It is the Lord who has created all these things that are on the earth and we pray to them, because He himself has preferred them. Our sacred girdle (Kusti) is made of seventy-two threads and we repeat when we tie it on, solemn profession of Faith. Our women when in their manner (periods) behold not either the sun or the sky or the moon, because they are the sources of light in excelsis; nor do they touch fire or water. They stand strictly aloof from everything, whether during the radiant day or the darksome night and sit apart until the catamenia has ceased. They look at the fire and sun only when they have washed from head to foot. So also, the female who gives birth to an infant must live apart for forty days. She ought to keep aloof all the while, just as if she were in her manner and if this rule is not observed, it is vile. Similarly, when a child is born before its time, or when the babe is still-born, the mother does not go, or run about hither and thither, nay does not even converse with any one. A female in that state must keep severely aloof for forty-one days."

All their other rites and customs also he described one by one to the Raja. When the mysteries of the Good Faith were thus expounded and the pearls of discourse strung in this most elegant manner, and when the Hindu Raja heard the oration, his mind regained perfect ease.

According to Dr. Jivanji Modi, five years elapsed between the landing and the consecration of the Atash Behram. It is a fair assumption but in the "Kiseh-i-Sanjan", no specific date of period is mentioned. It merely says: "One day they happened to have some business with the Raja and all of them went with cheerful hearts to him. The Dastur then addressed him thus: 'O Prince, you have given us a dwelling spot in this land. We now wish to install in the Indian clime, the Fire of Behram. But the land must be cleared for three farsangs so that the ceremonies connected with consecration (the Niragn) may be duly performed. No alien should be present, save and except the Wise men of the Good Faith. No person belonging to another creed might be there. Then only will the Fire be consecrated. If any strange person makes a noise there, the religious rites will doubtless be all of sudden interrupted.' Quoth the Raja then, 'I have given you the permission. I am disposed to be very liberal in this matter. I rejoice with all my soul that such a Prince (Shah) should be installed in my time. Indeed O sage, what act can be better than this? Go then speedily after this business and gird up thy loins.' That very instant the Prince issued his commands and gave the Dastur a pleasant site. The Hindu Rana Jadi had the land at once cleared on every site. All the Unbelievers within three farsangs were removed and no one remained there except the People of the Good Faith."

An Account of the Meeting between the Persian Refugees and Jadav Rana, as given in a Gujarati Garba.

Jadav Rana issued a proclamation inviting all citizens to assemble in an open "maidan" or meadow. On a throne covered with rich drapes, the Raja took his seat. He was dressed in the royal robes, wore a magnificent turban, and embroidered velvet slippers.

Ranged round him were his mounted bodyguard, dressed in white, holding glittering spears.

At a signal from Jadav Rana, the Persian refugees were brought into the centre of the Assembly. Their frail old priest holding a small "Afarghan" with sacred fire was the spokesman for the group. Through an interpreter, the King asked:

"What is it you want from us, O strangers from a far land?"

"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 brass bowl to be filled with milk and brought to the assembly. This was done. He stirred a spoonful of sugar in the bowl and holding it up in his trembling hands, asked.

"Does any man see sugar in this bowl of milk?" All shook their heads.

"Sire," 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 full length 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 ritual.

This account is indeed far more colourful than that given in the "Kisseh-i-Sanjan". These Gujarati Garbas were sung by Parsi women on such happy occasions as Navjotes and Weddings. It has been said that this particular Garbo was so moving that the children would jump up, clap their hands and start reciting Kusti prayer, whilst some of the adults would wipe away the tears that had gathered in their eyes.

Before I pass on to the next subject, I would just mention here that neither the "Kisseh" nor this garbo mentions anywhere about our forefathers promising Jadav Rana that we would not convert local people or marry Hindu women. There is no written evidence to support these so-called promises popularly believed by many Parsis. My own view is that the prevailing conditions were such that conversion or inter-marrying was unthinkable or impracticable. Our forefathers fitted in very nicely with the Hindu caste system.

Naryosang Dhaval and Sixteen Sanskrit Shlokas

Another thorny problem of the Parsi history relates to Dastur Naryosang Dhaval who is supposed to have explained to Jadav Rana the fundamentals of Zoroastrian religion in Sixteen Sanskrit Shlokas or verses. This is according to Parsi tradition but there is no written evidence anywhere and "Kisseh-i-Sanjan" makes no mention of 16 Shlokas or Dastur Naryosang Dhaval.

Further, according to Parsi tradition, Dastur Naryosang is also supposed to be the scholar who translated the "Yasna" and the "Khordeh Avesta" into Sanskrit. But according to Paymaster there is no justification for this belief. As regards the time of Naryosang, no date can be definitely fixed. From the old age of manuscripts and the form of Sanskrit in which Naryosang wrote, Dr. Fuhrer, a

scholar of our religion, believes that Naryosang lived before the 12th century A.D.

There are several versions of the 16 shlokas in Sanskrit and Gujarati which were afterwards translated into English. I have selected one that is brief so as not to bore you with lengthy ones. In one version at the end of each shloka there is the chorus that reads. "We the Parsis are patient (Dhira), brave (Vira), respectable (Gaurava) and strong (Balvan)." It is for this reason that in the wordings of the "Sanjan March" which we will sing in Gujarati later on, we find the words, Gura, Shura, Dhira and Vira. Now here is one version of the 16 shlokas.

Sixteen Shlokas In Brief

1. We are worshippers of Ahura Mazda and the sun and the five elements.
2. We observe silence whilst bathing, praying, making offerings to fire and eating.
3. We use incense, perfumes and flowers in our religious ceremonies.
4. We are worshippers of the cow.
5. We wear the sacred garment, the sudra or shirt, the kusti and the cap of two folds.
6. We rejoice in songs and with instruments of music on the occasion of our marriages.
7. We ornament and perfume our wives.
8. We are enjoined to be liberal in our charities and specially in excavating tanks and wells.
9. We are enjoined to extend our sympathies towards males as well as females.
10. We practice ablutions with "gaumutra" (taro), one of the products of cow.
11. We wear the sacred girdle when praying and eating.
12. We feed the sacred flame with incense.
13. We practice devotions five times a day.
14. We are careful observers of conjugal fidelity and purity.

15. We practise annual religious ceremonies on behalf of our ancestors.
16. We place great restraints on our women during and after their confinements.

The Parsis gradually migrated from Sanjan and settled in various places in Gujarat and the west coast of India. They were Navsari, Surat, Vankaner, Variav, Ankleshvar, Broach, Cambay in the north of Sanjan and Thana in the south.

After 700 years of peaceful and prosperous stay in Sanjan, the kingdom of Hindu Rajah was invaded. In the "Kisseh" the invaders are named Sultan Mahmud and his commander Alafkhan. Who these invaders were and when they invaded Sanjan are matters of controversy. The Parsis fought in the army of the Hindu Rajah and defended the kingdom. According to the "Kisseh", 1400 Parsis under their commander Ardeshir took active part as warriors in the battle. But the Rajah's army was defeated and Sanjan was destroyed about the end of the 14th century. (The commander Ardeshir and the Parsi warriors are remembered in the "Sanjan March" song.)

On account of the invasion of Sanjan, the Holy Fire Iranshah was removed and carried to the mountains of Bharot outside Sanjan. It was kept there for 12 years. Thereafter it was taken to Bansda, where it remained for a further 14 years.

At the insistence of Changa Asa, the leader of the Parsis at Navsari, the "Iranshah" was brought from Bansda to Navsari around 1419. We are told that it was carried to Navsari by the three Sanjana priests under the leadership of three high priests, Nagan Ram, Khorshed Kamdin and Janyan Sayer. The "Kisseh-i-Sanjan" ends with the account of carrying the Holy Fire to Navsari. "Iranshah" remained in Navsari for about 320 years with the exception of about 3 years (1733-1736) when it was carried to Surat on account of political instability.

When "Iranshah" was brought to Navsari, there was tacit understanding and later there were written agreements between the two priestly groups, that the Sanjana priests residing in Navsari would perform only the ceremonies connected with the Atash Behram (Boi and Machi ceremonies) while the Bhagaria priests would perform all other religious ceremonies. This arrangement lasted for a long time. Thereafter controversies and quarrels arose and complaints were made in the law courts. Ultimately it was decided to remove the Holy Fire to some place within the territorial jurisdiction of the Sanjana priests (namely from the river Dantara up to the river Par near Pardi).

In 1740, with the permit (parvane) of the government issued by Damaji Gaekwar, the Holy Fire was removed to Bulsar and in 1742 from there to Udvada within the territorial jurisdiction of the Sanjana priests. Since that year the Holy Fire "Iranshah" continues to burn at Udvada and may it continue to do so for thousands of years to come.

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Let us now turn our attention to other matters related to the history of our forefathers. Having settled down in Sanjan, they fared well in India. Their history can be broadly divided into three periods.

- (1) The first seven hundred years of steady progress
(700 A.D.to 1400 A.D.).
- (2) A century of adversity and depression
(1400 A.D.-1500 A.D).
- (3) A period of more than 400 years of progress and prosperity,
specially under the British Rule.
(1500 A.D. - 1948 A.D.).

I do not propose to deal with the period after 1948 because it is a subject by itself. Further we are in the process of making history. How it will turn out and what the historians of the future will say or judge the period, is a matter of conjecture. So I will leave it alone. Let me then revert to the early history periods.

Except for attack on Sanjan by the Mohameddans towards the end of the 15th century, there was no event of major importance affecting the community during all the 700 years after landing at Sanjan. It must have been a period of consolidation. Our forefathers were making steady progress in a foreign land. Their chief occupations were agriculture, carpentry, coastal trade, general business, tapping "toddy" trees (juice of which when fermented makes an intoxicating drink) and all crafts except that of blacksmith or goldsmith or any craft that involved the use of fire. As you know fire is the symbol of our Zoroastrian religion. Our ancestors held it in great reverence and as such would not take up occupations in which it was used. Further our forefathers were very adaptable and as such they could adapt themselves to circumstances that surrounded them. They got on well with the Hindus and later on with the Mohameddans. Only twice they came into conflict because

of their behaviour. These are known as the Cambay and Variav incidents in Parsi history.

The Cambay Incident. Towards the end of the 10th century, the Parsis outnumbered the original inhabitants at Cambay and forced the Hindus to leave it. One Hindu called Kalianrai who was one of the Hindus driven out from Cambay went to Surat where he did business in pearls and amassed great wealth. He returned to Cambay with many mercenaries, put a great number of Parsis to death and had their houses burnt. The result was that the Parsis had to leave Cambay. They however returned to it several years later when they felt it was safe to do so.

The Variav Incident. Towards the close of the 11th century, Parsis were one of the chief classes of traders in Cambay. It is recorded that the Parsi settlers enraged the Rajput Chief of Ratanpur by refusing to pay tribute and defeating a body of troops sent to enforce the order. When a fresh force arrived from Ratanpur, the Parsi men were absent at a feast outside the limits of Variav. So the Parsi women donned the armour of their husbands and relations and opposed the troops valiantly. When about to gain a victory over the Rajput soldiers, the helmet of one of the female warriors dropped and exposed the dishevelled hair. On seeing this the Ratanpur force rallied and made a desperate assault. The women preferring death to dishonour (in case they were captured and violated) heroically drowned themselves in the river Tapti. The day of this disaster (Farvardin month and Ashisvang Roj) is remembered at Surat by special religious ceremonies.

There is another incident which deserves a mention and is referred to as:

The Thana Incident. Thana was one of the Parsi settlements. The tradition states that the Parsi settlers had to beat a hasty retreat in order to avoid being forcibly converted to Christianity by the Portuguese in the first quarter of the 15th century. The Portuguese by sheer numbers had made themselves the masters of the locality.

Faced with the grim alternative of abandoning their religion or being put to death, the Parsi settlers decided to take recourse to a subterfuge. They went in a body to the Portuguese Governor and declared themselves ready to embrace Christianity. At the same time they asked for a special favour. On enquiry from the Governor, they replied that they would renounce their faith on the following Sunday but prior to that day they would like the last few days to be spent in worshipping their Fire and celebrating their festivals. The Governor was so pleased with this prompt submission, that he immediately issued orders that no one should interfere with the Parsis in performance of their rites and ceremonies.

The Parsis prepared a great feast to which all the Portuguese dignitaries were invited. Wine flowed freely and while the guests were indulging themselves, the Parsis left to the sound of music and in the midst of dancing and festivities. The Parsis left Thana and settled in Kalyan. It was over three hundred years when the Portuguese influence declined and the British influence increased that Parsis returned to Thana.

From the 18th century onwards the Parsis travelled far and wide to various places in India. They also went to foreign countries like China, Japan, Singapore, Burma in the East, Aden, Arabia, Iran in the Middle East and to some countries of South Africa. They travelled in India as well as abroad with the spirit of adventure and enterprise. In India they became pioneers in every field of life and established and promoted arts, science, trade, commerce and industry. Our Zoroastrian religion is the religion of faith, optimism, active virtues and spiritual values in human life. By their faith in Ahuramazda and Zarathushtrian Din, by their honesty, virtue and character, by their hard work and industry, our forefathers flourished in India. They earned for themselves not only fortune but also a permanent place and a name in the history of India.

Sanjan Memorial. It was 11 centuries after the landing at Sanjan, that the Parsis of Bombay under guidance of the late Mr. Jehangir Vimadalal and with the active support of the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee, undertook to raise a memorial column at Sanjan

to commemorate the historic landing of the Zoroastrian boat people. The Parsis of Bombay and other cities heartily supported the move and the memorial column was erected and opened in 1920.

After the demise of Mr. Jehangir Vimadalal, a pavilion in his honour was erected and opened in 1934. A Jashan ceremony is performed every year which is attended by Parsis from Bombay and neighbouring villages of Nargol, Saronda, Udvada and others. Those who attend the Jashan ceremony devoutly remember the early settlers in Sanjan who came to India from their ancient land of Iran for the preservation of their sacred religion of Zarathushtra and their time-honoured customs and manner of life.

Conclusion

Though the subject of this evening's talk is of a historical nature and interest, we must not forget that it was the survival of a religion that made this history possible. So I will briefly comment on the position of our Zarathushtrian faith and its role in our communal life. We should have some reason or justification to survive as a communal unit. And it is Zoroastrian religion which has been the justification in the past and should always be in the future.

A religion as old as ours is bound to acquire some encrustations formed upon it during the course of its history; this has happened to other religions also. But in the case of ours they indirectly preserved the original kernel of the Zend Avesta and the teachings of our Prophet. If Gathas had not been incorporated in Ijasni ceremony, we would have no Gathas. This is but just one example and we should be truly grateful to the great Dasturs and Mobeds of the past and our forefathers for keeping Zoroastrian religion alive in spite of various handicaps, hardships and persecution. The basic principles of our religion are eternally true, simple and practicable even in an age of science and technology as our is today. They are Unity in nature, Oneness with Godhead, immortality of soul, and purity of thought, word and deed.

Our religion is meant to be a living spiritual force urging us towards Perfection (Haurvatat) and Immortality (Ameretat). And the means to do this is to build our spiritual house on the four pillars of Righteousness (Asha or Ashoi), Good Mind (Vohu Mano), Strength of God (Xhatra), and Holy Devotion (Armaiti). Please bear this in mind when you sing the last song, "Children of the Royal Race", where Charity, Ashoi and Good Mind are emphasised.

We who have chosen to settle in the West and make our homes in new lands can do no better than to remain steadfast to the religion of Zarathushtra for which our forefathers made so many sacrifices. In the list of forefathers I include those Zoroastrians who stayed behind in Iran and suffered terrible hardships and persecution but did not give up their noble faith. It is my hope that one day I may stand before you to tell their story just as today I have related the story of those who left Iran, the story of boat people.

I close my talk with a sentence found in several of our "Nyaish" prayers: —

**Dad Din beh Mazdayasnan, Agahi Ravai goafarangani bad
Hafta Keshwar Zamin, Aedun bad!**

**"May the knowledge, extent and the fame of the
Commandments of the excellent Mazdayasnin religion be made
wide spread in the world over its seven regions; so may it be!"**

=x=x=x=x=x=

Guidelines of the Lecture

"KISSEH-I-SANJAN" —

Written in Persian verses by Behman Kaikobad Sanjana of Navsari in 1600 A.D. First Gujerati translation was made by Dastur Framji Aspandiarji Rabadi in 1831. Subsequent translations were made by E.B. Eastwick in 1844 and by S.H. Hodivala in 1920.

SASSANIAN DYNASTY - 226 A.D.-651 A.D.

ARDASHIR PAKAN - Founder of the dynasty

YAZDEGARD III
(Yazdegard Sheriar)- The last Zoroastrian Monarch

FIRST INVASION OF IRAN- Arabs conquer Iraq in 633 A.D.

BEHRAM JADUYEH - Irani General defeats the Arabs in 634 A.D.

RUSTAM-BIN HORMAZD - * Chief of Iranian Army

PRINCE FIROZE - * Royal Prince
* *Contenders to power in Iran*

BATTLE OF QUADEYSYEH- (636 A.D.)

BATTLE OF NEHAVAND - (641 A.D.)

IRANIAN ARMIES - Defeated by the Arabs in these two battles. Yazdegard III murdered at Merv a few years later. The end of the Sassanian Empire in 651 A.D.

MOUNTAINS OF KHOROSAN - Zoroastrians withdrew to these mountains and stayed there for about 100 years.

HORMUZ - A port in the Persian Gulf; Zoroastrians stayed there for about 15 years prior to their departure to India.

DIU - A port in Kathiawar peninsula in Gujerat province, the first port of landing in India. Here the refugees stayed for 19 years.

SANJAN - Pilgrim Fathers granted permission to settle in Sanjan by the Hindu Ruler Jadau Rana. The date of arrival 785 A.D. according to the Kisseh.

CONDITIONS MADE BY JADAV RANA :

- (1) The high priest of the refugees would have to explain their religion to the King.
- (2) The newcomers would have to give up their native Persian language and take on the language of India.
- (3) The women should exchange their traditional Persian garb with the customary dress of the country.
- (4) The men should lay down their arms.

- (5) The Parsees should hold their wedding processions only in dark.

IRANSHAH : —

Most sacred fire of the Parsees lit about 5 years after their arrival in Sanjan. It was moved to the mountains of Bahrot during Mohammedan invasion of Sanjan roundabout 1490 A.D., then to Bansdah, Navsari and finally to Udwada in 1742.

**NARYOSANG DHAVAL and
SIXTEEN SANSKRIT SHLOKAS : —**

It is believed that Dastur Naryosang Dhaval explained Zoroastrian religion to Jadav Rana in 16 Sanskrit Shlokas or verses. However, the Kisseh does not make any mention about this. The exact date as to when this savant lived is not known. It is presumed he lived before 12th Century A.D.

INVASION OF SANJAN: —

According to the Kisseh, 1400 Parsis under their commander Ardeshir fought in the army of the Hindu Rajah but were defeated towards the end of the 14th Century.

TWO TRAGEDIES: —

The Cambay Incident in 997 A.D. when a great number of Parsis were put to death.

The Variav Incident took place towards the close of the 11th Century. Parsi women fought bravely the Rajput troops but preferring death to dishonour, drowned themselves in the River Tapti.

THANA SETTLEMENT: —

In the first quarter of the 15th Century, the Portuguese forcibly tried to convert the Parsis of that settlement to Christianity.

SANJAN MEMORIAL COLUMN: —

It was erected at Sanjan in 1920 with the support of the Parsis of Bombay and other cities of India. Mr. Jehangir Vimadlal played an important part. After his demise a pavilion in his honour was erected in 1934.

ZOROASTRIANS WHO STAYED BEHIND IN MOTHERLAND IRAN

by

Cyrus P. Mehta

*The above talk was given at the W.Z.O. Seminar
held in London on Sunday 31st July 1988.*

Last year at the Zoroastrian Youth Conference held in London under the auspices of the W.Z.O., I spoke on the subject of "Kisseh-i-Sanjan". In that talk, I related the story of our forefathers who left Iran after the downfall of the Sassanian Empire in order to escape persecution by the Arabs and how they fared in India since their arrival in Sanjan. At the end of the talk I had expressed my hope that God willing, I would be able to talk to you about the fate of Zoroastrians who did not leave Iran and suffered great hardship for centuries. I am therefore very happy to speak to you this morning since my hope has been fulfilled. Today's talk deals with the causes that brought about the downfall of the Sassanian Empire and what happened to our forefathers who stayed in motherland Iran.

History teaches us several lessons; some of them are learnt after much suffering and hardship. But the tragedy is that sometime hard-learnt lessons are forgotten by the later generations and history repeats itself. We will consider this matter towards the end of the talk. Some of you may know about our Iranian history but have forgotten it or do not remember it fully. So I hope my talk will refresh your memory. Those who know nothing about the subject will have a glimpse of the past for the first time and feel encouraged to study for themselves the history of Iran and Zoroastrians. So let us begin.

PART 1

The last of the great Sassanian emperor was Khusro I, also known as Anosharvan or Nosharvan Adil or Noshirvan the Just. He ruled from 531-579 A.D. He was a learned man and had studied philosophy and science. He encouraged translation of Indian and Greek books on those subjects into Pahlavi. He was a kind, merciful and tolerant emperor but he was also firm, just and resolute.

His son Hormazd IV ascended the throne in 579 A.D. on the death of his father. Unfortunately for him Iran was threatened at that time by Romans, Turks and Arabs who all wanted to recover their lost power and prestige. His failing was he did not trust anybody. He even suspected his son Khusro of plotting against his life. So Khusro had no choice but to flee and the consequence was that the members of the royal family rose in revolt. They imprisoned Hormazd and later murdered him in 590 A.D. The internecine and fratricidal struggle which started during the reign of Hormazd IV may be regarded as the beginning of the end of the Sassanian Empire.

Khusro II, better known as Khusro Parvez was proclaimed emperor in 590 A.D. He too had his share of fighting against Romans and his own generals, some of whom he deposed, imprisoned, or put to death. His own people were enraged when he decided that his eldest son Kobad would not succeed him. Some nobles conceived a plot and rose in favour of Kobad. Khusro Parvez was imprisoned and murdered in 628 A.D.

Kobad II ascended the throne in 628 A.D. but died after a few months' rule. Thereafter nine kings and queens ascended the throne in quick succession in a short period of 4 years from 628 to 632 A.D. They were Artakshir III, Shahrbaraz (Khusro III), Queen Puranmidokht, Zurvanshah Gushnaband, Queen Azarmidokht, Farrokhzad (Khusro IV), Peroj II, Khurzad Khusro and Hormazd V.

History tells us there were tragic chaos in the royal family after the death of Khusro Parvez. Intrigues, deception and other dangerous vices were rampant. The princes instigated and actively supported by their mothers of foreign extraction and foreign faith, played havoc in the royal family, in aristocracy and in state affairs. The kings and queens were proclaimed and most of them were deposed or murdered in quick succession. In such deplorable and disastrous conditions Yazdegard III, better known as Yazdegard Sheriar, a grandson of Khusro Parvez ascended the throne of Iran in 632 A.D. But before we can consider the events of his reign, we must turn our attention to an important event that took place in the world history. That event was the birth of Prophet Muhammad at Mecca in 570 A.D. The prophet took pride in the fact he was born in the reign of Anosharvan the Just. He began to preach his religion in 610 A.D. and later on had to flee to Medina in 622 A.D. It is a fact of history that he had addressed letters both to Khusro Pervez and Roman emperor Heraclius and called upon them to embrace Islam.

As seen earlier, the Iranians were a divided nation. A Zoroastrian sage, Behzad, was trying hard to bring about unity, amity and peace among the opposing factions of the Iranians. But peace makers are not popular with warring factions and Behzad had to flee for protection to Prophet Muhammad at Medina. As he was a wise and learned man, the Arabs called him 'Salman Fars' or the Farsi Solomen. It is popularly believed he taught much about Zoroastrianism to Prophet Muhammad and the similarity that exists between Zoroastrianism and Islam may be due to his influence on the Prophet.

Prophet Muhammad passed away on 8th June 632 A.D. the year in which Yazdegard Sheriar ascended the throne of Iran. By then the Arab tribes were united and organised under religious leadership. Fired by religious zeal and fanaticism, they were dreaming of world conquest. Taking advantage of the deplorable and chaotic

conditions in Iran and with the support of the disgruntled Iranian chiefs in exile, the Arabs decided to conquer Iran. The initial Iranian reverses in the battle were not regarded as serious but the two decisive battles fought at Qadisyya in 636 A.D. and Nihavand in 641 A.D. brought the Iranian nation to its knees.

Yazdegard Sheriar was still hopeful of receiving assistance from the Turks and the Chinese and of recovering his lost kingdom. For ten years he wandered from place to place, pursued and harassed by the enemies and traitors. At last he went to Marv. When he was in danger of being recognised by the enemy, he hid himself in a flour mill. The miller whose name was Khusro, offered some food to eat; but the latter requested the miller to procure the 'Barsam' (sacred twigs) to say grace before taking his simple meal. The request for the sacred twigs aroused suspicion and the detailed description confirmed that the warrior hiding in the mill must be Yazdegard himself. The governor of Marv was one Mahu-i-Suri, who was keen to capture Yazdegard. On being informed about Yazdegard's whereabouts he ordered the miller to kill Yazdegard forthwith.

Yazdegard's dead body was stripped of costly dress and valuables and his naked body was thrown into a nearby river. We are informed by Firdausi Tusi that when the dawn broke, people were dismayed to see the naked body of their emperor. The monks of a Christian Monastery took it out of water and disposed off the body reverently.

After the death of Yazdegard, his son Piroj proclaimed himself king of Iran. He took refuge as the king of Iran in exile in the mountain of Tokharistan in Central Asia, then under the Chinese rule. The Chinese emperor recognised Piroj as the king of Iran. Later Piroj went to China proper and served as a Captain in the Chinese army. He built a fire temple in China in 677 A.D. It appears that there was Zoroastrian population in Central Asia and China in the 10th century.

Apart from those who went to Central Asia and China, there were smaller Zoroastrian kingdoms in Northern and Eastern Iran. They were ruled by the descendants of the Sassanian royal family and aristocracy. These rulers were known as 'Sipabad' or 'Ispabad' meaning 'the commander'. They ruled the provinces of Mazandran, Gilan, Tabristan and Khorasan. They struck their coins with Pahlavi legends and they continued to profess Zoroastrian faith. It is believed that such small Zoroastrian kingdoms existed for about 150 years after the downfall of the Sassanian Empire. History also tells us that there was a dynasty of the Zoroastrian priests who ruled the mountainous region of Damavand in the district of Tabristan. The rulers of this dynasty were known as 'masmoghan' or the 'chief of Mobeds'.

PART 2

We must now move on to consider what happened to those who stayed in Iran proper after the Arab invasion and conquest of that country. The primary purpose of the invasion was propagation of Islam. The war with Iran was regarded by the Arabs as 'the holy war' and as such they fanatically waged it for proselytism of subject-nation by persuasion, inducement, force, or combination of all these. The Pahlavi books written in the 9th century refer to 'evil times' and 'wicked rule' but no definite information as to how Zoroastrians lived in Iran for about 150 years after the Arab conquest. This is understandable. Who has time to sit down and record events when going through a period of great changes that threatened their very existence. However it is certain that during this period a great number of Zoroastrians were converted to Islam by one means or another.

Though Prophet Muhammad united numerous warring Arab tribes, within 15 years of his passing away, tribal jealousies and rivalries

Zoroastrians who stayed behind in Motherland Iran

reappeared. They claimed racial superiority and began to despise, illtreat and molest the subject nations, not only non-Muslims but also non-Arab Muslims. Some unscrupulous governors of provinces collected 'jizya' or poll-tax not only from non-Muslims but also from those converted to Islam.

The Umayyad Caliphs. The first dynasty that ruled Iran from Damascus was the Umayyad Caliphs. Arabs when they conquered Iran, apart from their religious zeal, were illiterate and as such civil administration was mainly entrusted to Iranian converts to Islam. These converts surpassed the Arabs not only in arts and general sciences but also in religious studies and Arab traditions. The Sassanian administrative machinery was kept intact by the Arab Caliphs and Iran was governed and administered by Iranian converts to Islam. These non-Arab Muslims were referred to as 'Mawali'. How interesting to note that Gujarati speaking Parsis often use the word 'Mawali' but not realizing the original context in which it was used. May be our forefathers did not look upon kindly to their own kin who embraced Islam but the word as used by modern Parsis, merely means 'mad', 'crafty' or something similar.

The Abbasid Caliphs. The rule of the Umayyad Caliphs was replaced by those of the Abbasid Caliphs in about 750 A.D. With the rise of the Abbasids, influence of Iranian Muslims prevailed in the affairs of the Government. The status of the Persians rose from the position of a despised and slighted subject-race to the highest and most influential command. This came about by their skilful use of prevailing circumstances. The new rule also brought some measure of relief to the oppressed Zoroastrians. It appears that the beginning of the 9th century brought greater freedom for the Zoroastrians in the sense that they were openly professing their religion and observing their religious practices. It was in the same century that Zoroastrian religious and secular literature flourished. Twenty Avestan Nasks, out of twenty one of the Sassanian times and Pahlavi translations of the nineteen Nasks were still in existence. Most of the Pahlavi texts that we have today were composed or compiled in the 9th century. So much for the good

things that happened in that century. On the bad side, during the Abbasid rule disabilities were imposed on non-Muslims and even the converts to Islam were molested and murdered and amongst them were several men of learning.

The Seljuqs. We now move on to the period of the Turkish dynasty of the Seljuqs. A Turkish chief by the name of Tughril Beh rose to power, overran northern Iran and entered Baghdad the seat of Arab power in 1055 A.D. He united the Iranian countries under the Turkish dynasty of the Seljuqs. History tells us that both Yazd and Kerman, the centres of the Zoroastrians were under the Turkish Atabek dynasty in 1170 A.D.

The Mongol Invasion. The thirteenth century brought a terrible and devastating catastrophe upon the people of Iran which then consisted of Arabs, Iranian Muslims and non-Muslims, the latter group consisting of Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. Chingiz Khan, the dreaded Mongol conqueror attacked Iran and conquered Khorasan and Adarbaizan in 1220-1221 A.D. His grandson Hulague invaded Iran once again in 1256 and subdued the whole country and exterminated the Caliphate of Baghdad in 1258 A.D. Chingiz and Hulague were bloodthirsty heathens. If any resistance was encountered and a Mongol prince was slain in battle, they spared no one - young and old, learned and unlearned, all were butchered. They stabled their horses in mosques, burned the libraries, used priceless manuscripts for fuel and often razed the conquered city to the ground, destroyed every living thing within it and sowed the site with salt. The Persian literature including our scriptures which flourished in the 10th and 11th centuries suffered serious setback and disruption.

The Tartar Invasion. As fate would have it, Iran suffered from another invasion in the 14th century. Timur Lang conquered northern and north-eastern Iran (1370-1384 A.D.) with consequent disruption and massacre.

The Safavid Dynasty. The Tartar rule came to end with the foundation of a new dynasty, founded by Ismail. This dynasty ruled Iran from about 1500 A.D. to 1746 A.D. Ismail was a brave king and a philosopher. Iran had suffered several invasions. It was time to establish an Iranian nation which Ismail did and Isfahan became Iran's capital city. There is some evidence to suggest that there were Zoroastrian priests and a Zoroastrian community living in Isfahan from the middle of 12th century but it could have been destroyed by the Mongol and Tartar invasions of 13th and 14th centuries.

The reign of Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1628) was propitious for Iran in general. He encouraged Zoroastrian families of Kerman to migrate to Isfahan because he found them good artisans. They were allowed to settle in a suburb which came to be known as 'Gabrabad', meaning 'the Zoroastrian settlement'. An Italian traveller by the name of Pietro della Valle who travelled in Iran in 1617 visited 'Gabrabad' and describes it as under:-

"It is well built, the streets are large and straight, handsome by far then those of Julfa, the Christian quarters, because it is built more carefully. But all the houses are low, single-storied and plain and quite in keeping with the poor conditions of the tenants."

There was another suburb of Isfahan where Zoroastrians lived and it was known as 'Gabristan' meaning 'the Zoroastrian Residence'. But Shah Abbas II expelled them from this quarter in order to build a pleasure complex of bazaars, baths, mosques and palaces. It appears that some Zoroastrians returned to Kerman but by 1775 there was no trace of two Zoroastrian settlements of Isfahan and it is believed they were massacred earlier during the reign of Shah Sultan Hosain of Safvids who ruled from 1694-1713 A.D.

However one must not forget that Zoroastrians fared nicely under the rule of Shah Abbas the Great. Mary Boyce in her paper "The Fire Temples of Kerman", writes:-

"Both in Kerman and Yazd, Shah Abbas is still gratefully remembered by the Zoroastrians for protecting them from the harshness of local governors. Even though the particular stories told of his interventions are evidently romanticised, there is presumably a kernel of truth in the tradition."

Mary Boyce further informs us that in one inscription Shah Abbas is praised and is mentioned with Faridun and Noshirwan the Just.

Before we leave the era of Safavid dynasty, I would mention that in the beginning of the 16th century Iran was invaded by the Ottoman Turks. It is important to bear in mind various invasions of Iran from outside because with each succeeding invasion the Zoroastrians suffered badly at the hands of the invaders. Regarding the Zoroastrian population of Kerman or Kirman the late Mr. Rashid Shahmardan Irani wrote:-

"The Zoroastrians in Kirman during the early period of the Safavid dynasty were living under great duress. The walled city of Kirman, then known as Gowashir, had strong fortifications. The Muslims forced the Zoroastrians to get out of the walled city and live outside the gates. They went to northern outskirts of the city, established themselves there and built houses, bazaars and fire-temples. The locality was known as Gabr Mohalla."

In the 18th century, the Zoroastrians of Iran were subjected to tribulation, devastation and massacre during the Afghan Wars (1722-1729). The Afghan Chief Mir Vaaiz rose in revolt and his son Mahmud invaded Iran by way of Sistan and Kerman - both centres of Zoroastrian population in those days. Mahmud conquered Kerman but was soon defeated and had to retreat. With reinforcements he attacked again, reconquered Kerman and marched up to Isfahan and Shiraz. In the counter-attack, Kerman and neighbouring provinces having large Zoroastrian population were devastated once again. In Kerman only one Zoroastrian out of ten was able to escape and take refuge in the walled city. During these attacks and counter-attacks, the battles were fought in the important centres of Zoroastrian settlements. The net result

was that the Zoroastrian population dwindled considerably as we shall see later on in the talk. To add insult to the injury, the surviving population was subjected to extortion. Though their number had dwindled considerably, the 'Jazyah' or poll-tax was not reduced in the same proportion. This high-handedness of the authorities crushed the Zoroastrian community mercilessly, till the tax was reduced by a benevolent king of the Zand dynasty; his name was Karim Khan. The Zand dynasty was a short lived one, from 1750 to 1794. The Zoroastrians who survived the holocaust of the Afghan wars and who were scattered in various places began to settle down in and around Yazd and Kerman. They decided to do something about the crushing poll-tax. So they went to Shiraz, the then capital city of Iran to present their petition to King Karim Khan Zand. But they were unable to see the king for 18 months. Finally they succeeded and the King immediately ordered for the reduction of taxes according to pre-massacre rate per individual.

When Karim Khan died, his son Lutaf Ali Khan should have succeeded him. But the commander of the army, Aga Muhammad Khan Quajar revolted and came to power. There were terrible battles and bloodshed for about six months during which our forefathers suffered heavily.

The new Quajar dynasty founded by Aga Muhammad Khan Quajar ruled for about 130 years (1795-1924 A.D.). Professor Browne who visited Yazd and Kerman in 1888, described the conditions of Zoroastrians as under:-

"Though less liable to molestation now than in former times, they often met with ill-treatment and insult at the hands of the more fanatical Muhammadans by whom they are regarded as pagans, not equal to Christians, Jews and other people of the book (Ahlul-kitab). Thus they were compelled to wear the dull yellow raiment as a distinguishing badge; they are not permitted to wear socks, or to wind their turbans tightly or neatly or to ride a horse; and if when riding even a donkey, they should chance to meet a Musulman, they must dismount while he

Zoroastrians who stayed behind in Motherland Iran

passes without regard to his age or rank — So much for the petty annoyances to which they are continually subject. But when a bad governor rules and the ruffians (lutis) held sway, many were robbed, beaten and threatened with death, unless they would renounce their ancient faith and embrace Islam; not a few were actually done to death."

Thirteen years later Professor Jackson visited the Zoroastrians of Yazd in 1901. He reported as under:

"The Zoroastrians who dwell within the city are largely occupied in trading. This privilege was not accorded to them until about fifty years ago and they are even now subject to certain restrictions and exactions to which no Mohammedan would be liable. They are not allowed, for instance, to sell food in the bazaar, in as much as that would be an abomination in the eyes of the Muslims who regard them as unbelievers and therefore unclean. Until 1882 they were oppressed by the 'jazia' tax, a poll-tax imposed upon them as non-believers and this gave them an opportunity for grinding them down by extortionate assessment and trading-tolls."

PART 3

Let me now pass on to another subject, namely the contact between the oppressed Zarathustis of Iran and Parsis who were doing well in India. The latter were largely instrumental in the abolition of the 'jazia' tax, a poll-tax. The story as to how this contact came about is interesting.

A beautiful Zoroastrian girl living in Iran was in danger of being abducted and converted to Islam. Whereupon she and her father fled to India. After considerable trouble and risk to their lives, they arrived in Bombay. They had no friends, could not speak any of the Indian languages and no home to go to. In such dire straits they were seen standing in Cowasji Patel street in Fort area of Bombay. A Parsi-Zoroastrian by the name of Edulji Darabji Laskari took pity

Zoroastrians who stayed behind in Motherland Iran

on them and invited them to stay in his house. The father, once he was convinced that his daughter was safe and would be well looked after by the Laskari family went back to Iran and gradually brought the rest of the family to Bombay.

Apparently he had other beautiful daughters and gradually they married into Parsi families such as Pande, Cama, Petit and Meher-Homji. The girl who married into Petit family later became Lady Sakarbai, when her husband became Sir Dinshaw Petit. All these marriages resulted in the Parsis of Bombay coming to know first hand of the real sufferings of their co-religionists in Yazd and Kerman. In 1853, a society was founded for the amelioration of the conditions of the Zarathustis of Iran.

In 1854, the first agent of the society was sent to Yazd; his name was Maneckjee Limjee Hataria. His efforts, persistence and profound knowledge of Iran was greatly responsible for the abolition of 'jazia' tax. Mr. Hataria had the good fortune of receiving help from Sir Henry Rawlinson, the British Ambassador to the Court of Iran. After several futile attempts he succeeded in obtaining a reduction of one hundred in 992 Tomans payable by the Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman.

But it was not till 1882 that the first Dinshaw Manekji Petit, who was then the President of the Amelioration Society, received through Mr. Thompson of the British Embassy a communication, enclosing an Imperial 'Farman' decreeing the final repeal of the 'jazia' tax. The campaign on the part of the Parsis of India to relieve their co-religionists from the crushing 'jazia' tax, cost them, it is estimated Rs.1,00,000. The Imperial Charter of August 1882 is a historical document reflecting credit on the devotion, tact and perseverance of Maneckjee Limjee Hataria.

The efforts for the abolition of the 'jazia' tax lasted 25 years. Some credit must also be given to the British Government who put considerable pressure on the Shah and also to Major General Sir Henry Rowlinson, the British Ambassador at the Court of Tehran. His skilful introduction to the subject was most valuable in rousing

Zoroastrians who stayed behind in Motherland Iran

the sympathy of the Shah Nasser-ud-Din against the injustice that was being perpetrated on the Zoroastrians of Iran. Regarding Sir Henry Rawlinson I may add here that it was he who was responsible for obtaining Cuneiform inscriptions of the Behistun Rocks engraved there by Darius the Great of Achemenid dynasty round about 520 B.C. The decipherment of Cuneiform records constitute one of the most memorable accomplishments of the 19th century. We should always honour the memory of this great man.

Since the abolition of the 'jazia' tax, the Parsis of India took more interest in their co-religionists left behind in Iran. Several people, including Doctors and Zoroastrian scholars visited Iran from time to time bringing back fresh ideas to help their Irani brethren. Mention must be made of Mr. Pestonji D Marker who spent Rs. 4,00,000 to build and establish two schools in Yazd, one for the boys and one for the girls. An orphanage for Zoroastrian boys was also established. These schools where religious knowledge of the Zoroastrian faith was imparted, helped to prevent the future generations of the Zoroastrians in Iran from becoming Bahis. Many Zoroastrians in those days became Bahis so that at least they could keep their bodies and souls together. Mr. Marker also built a clock tower in the memory of the immortal poet Firdausi Tusi, with dials discernible from all four sides of the tower in 'Khayaban-e-Peshotan Marker' in the town of Yazd.

From time to time scholarly Dasturs like Dastur Dr. Dhalla, Dr. Sir Jeewanji Jamshedji Mody and Dastur Kaikhusru Mahiyar Kutar visited Iran and lectured before Zoroastrian brethren with a view to imparting religious knowledge to them. The Iran League was formed in Bombay in 1922. It did valuable work in cementing friendship between the Iranian Government and the Zoroastrians in India with a view to inducing the Government of Iran to keep a kindly eye on the Zoroastrians in that country.

PART 4

Though conditions of the Zoroastrians improved after 1906, their position changed dramatically with the establishment of the liberal and enlightened rule of the Pahlavi dynasty founded in 1925 by His Imperial Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi. It established benevolent rule of law, justice and security and brought peace, prosperity and freedom to the people of Iran in general and to the Zoroastrians in particular. Under the benign sovereignty of Reza Shah and after him his son the late Mohammad Reza, the Zoroastrians of Iran enjoyed personal safety and security and religious, political, and economic freedom in full measure, just as other citizens of Iran.

Reza Khan (1878-1944 A.D.) was an officer in the Cossack Brigade. After repulsing the Soviet invasion in 1920, he occupied Tehran in 1921. He gained the confidence of the whole army and carved out a destiny which is reminiscent of Napoleon's. He was named prime minister, given full powers by the deputies and appeared to all as the liberator and hero of national independence that had been won back at the expense of the Russians and the British. He showed to people what a state of impotence and submission they had been reduced to by the spineless dynasty of the Quajars, who had reigned since 1786. Finally on October 31, 1925, he felt strong enough to evict the last king of the dynasty, young Shah Ahmed Quajar. He was crowned Emperor in December of the same year.

The progress made by Iran and the Zarathustis of Iran under the two Pahlavi rulers is well known and outside the scope of today's talk. After the departure of Shah Mohammad Reza in 1979, Iran has gone through considerable changes. A new Islamic republic has been founded. We can only hope and pray that our people living there will survive somehow as their forefathers did before them and Iran will become a country where its people will prosper and it will live in peace with other countries of the world.

PART 5

We will now briefly examine the estimates of the Zoroastrian population in Iran after the Arab conquest. Considering the precarious and deplorable conditions through which they lived, it is practically impossible to form even a rough estimate. But here and there, bits of information scattered in various sources such as Persian Rivayats and accounts of European travellers in the 17th century, are important sources of information.

Here are a few examples:

The Rivayat of 1511 A.D. mentions the total population living in Sharfabad, Turkabad, Yazd, Kerman, Sistan and Khorasan as mere 6,000 persons.

The Rivayat of Kamdin Shahpur (1559 A.D.) mentions 3,000 persons living in Kerman.

Tavenier, who was in Kerman in 1654 A.D. gives the figure of 10,000 Zoroastrians living in Kerman.

Trezel (1807-1809 A.D.) mentions 8,000 Zoroastrians at Yazd and in the surrounding villages.

Christe (1809 A.D.) gives the figure of 3,000 families in whole of Iran, from which one could estimate total population of Zoroastrians to be about 24,000.

In addition to the above, we have information from Mr. Maneckji Limji Hataria who travelled in Iran in 1854. He gave following figures:

During the Safavid reign (1502-1747 A.D.) - 60,000 families or 500,000 Zoroastrians.

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During the reign of Ali Shaha Quajar (1797-1848 A.D.) - 6,000 families or about 48,000 Zoroastrians.

In the middle of 19th century - 1,000 families or 8,000 Zoroastrians.

From 1854 onwards at the instance of the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Fund, various censuses were taken at different times in all the centres of the Zoroastrian community such as Yazd, Kerman, etc. and later on in Tehran. I do not wish to go into details of these censuses but would summarize the estimated population of Iran at various periods as under:

7th to 15th centuries	-	Sources not available; as such no estimate.
16th to 17th centuries	-	500,000.
18th century	-	48,000.
19th century	-	18,000.

From the above figures one can conclude that the Zoroastrian population reduced during the 18th century mainly due to Afghan wars of 1722, 1729 and 1744. This reduced population further dwindled about the end of the 18th century during the revolt of Aqua Muhammad Khan Qajar in 1794. Hence in the 19th century, the Zoroastrian population in Iran was mere 12,000 souls. This rose to 18,000 in 1966. In the words of Professor Jackson it could be truly said about our forefathers who stayed in Iran and stubbornly refused to give up their noble Zoroastrian faith that "they sealed their faith with their blood".

In my estimation they were the true heroes for whom no memorial exists. If we cannot have one of bricks and mortar, let us start including them in our 'Farvardian Jashan' ceremonies and 'Urvano-kardo' Prayer along with 'Paorryo-tkaeshnam' (the ancient worshippers of Yazdan) and 'Nababazdishtanam' (people born in

Zoroastrian religion or progeny of those who embraced Zoroastrianism in early days) so that we their descendents are constantly reminded to learn and practise our religion and be true to it for which thousands and thousands laid down their lives.

PART 6

Right at the outset of my talk I said that history teaches us several lessons. The first lesson that comes home to us is that our forefathers lost a mighty empire, not because of superior Arab forces but because as a nation they were hopelessly divided. There were plots, counter-plots and intrigues.

Most of our people are not aware of our communal history. The community was torn asunder by Kabisa controversy in the 16th century. This was about which calendar was correct, Kadmi or Sehenshai. Then there was that bitter struggle between Bhagaria and Sanjana priests as to who should perform what ceremonies. Early part of this century was taken up with controversial subjects of conversion and inter-marriages resulting in court cases, etc. Looking back one may ask what lasting benefits did all these controversies bring to the community. Fifty years from now our children and grandchildren will ask the same question about the communal controversies that rage today in various parts of the world and they will not thank us for them. Thus hard learnt lessons are forgotten by later generations. For a community like ours it is a tragedy. Today we have no country of our own. We constitute a microscopic community of the world living in scattered groups. Our very survival as a community is now in great danger. We are born alone and we die alone and we still have not learnt how to associate with one another in peaceful harmony.

Thousands of people may call themselves Zoroastrians but there is no real fellowship amongst them until they know each other mutually and have sympathy for one another. A true community has faith and wisdom that illuminate it. There is enough guidance given

to us in our religious texts as to how best we should live our lives. A community should be a gathering of people who know and trust one another and where there is social harmony. In fact harmony is the life and real purpose of a true community or any organisation.

All over the world we have several community organisations. They have their Memorandums which no doubt have very good objectives. But I have my doubts whether harmony, accord and peace within the community are mentioned or stressed. However the clause 3(g) of the Memorandum of the World Zoroastrian Organisation does state as one of its aim as "to encourage and promote increasing contact, co-operation, unity and solidarity amongst the Zoroastrians throughout the world". Any Zoroastrian wishing to be a part of the community must live up to this ideal of harmony, peace and accord as mentioned in our prayers.

Now there are three kind of organisations. First there are those that are organised on the basis of power, wealth or authority of some leaders. Second there are those that are organised because of its convenience to the members which will continue to exist so long as the members satisfy their convenience and do not quarrel. Third there are those that are organised with some good teaching at its centre and harmony as its way of life. This is the only true organisation for in it the members live in one spirit.

Some may well argue this is too high an ideal and not practicable. I beg to differ. They might then as well say, "Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds" are out because they cannot be practised fully. Our "Ahem Vohu" prayer is highly idealistic. It says "Righteousness is the highest good; that alone is true happiness. Happiness comes to him who is righteous for the sake of highest righteousness." Are we going to discard it because it is highly idealistic? Of course not. If we give high priority to harmony, we will find ways and means to practise Unity among Diversity. And if we do not, as a community we have a very poor future.

It has been said about us, perhaps unkindly, that we are a quarrelsome lot and where there are three Parsis, there are three parties. This is over-simplification and not quite true, but behind such statements there is a hidden warning. That warning is that all human beings have certain biological, racial and cultural heritage. By and large we have inherited certain characteristics of our forefathers. They had large empires in Achaemenide and Sassanian times and depended upon others for their luxurious style of living.

Achaemenians were noted for their gaiety, amiability, hospitality, boisterousness and above all industry. Their energy was boundless but they were also subject to moods. We still find these traits among our people today. The Sassanians with legitimate pride traced their ancestry to the Achaemenians just as we link ourselves to the Sassanians. But with a life of luxury, manhood decays. What kind of legacy have we inherited? It has been said that we are sporting yet flippant, adaptive and assimilative yet imitative, composed and self-reliant yet impulsive. We are enterprising and practical, virile and industrious. But at the same time we are impulsive, not given to reflection and emotional. At times we show a lack of philosophical approach and are not rich in imagination. Many writers have suggested that internal dissensions resulted in the loss of our empire, a point which I have already mentioned.

But we cannot go on blaming indefinitely everything on our racial heritage. We have to take responsibility for our actions and the way we behave. All human beings have been given freedom of choice as pointed out by Zarathushtra. In Yasna 31, verse 11 he says, "Mazda, Thou has given us capacities to act and also true doctrines to guide in order that we choose our beliefs at will." Gathas further tells us to exercise our "better mind" and not the "evil mind". If we as a community wish to live in harmony and make progress then we should make efforts to develop certain qualities of mind and heart. Spiritual Masters of the past and the present mention the following qualities. They are truthfulness, honesty, purity of thoughts, words and deeds, contentment, fortitude, tolerance, detachment, service, humility and love for our fellow human beings, the animal kingdom and love for God Himself.

In conclusion I would like to leave with you two suggestions. The first is to hold a special annual service of remembrance in memory of Zoroastrians as well as non-Zoroastrians who made outstanding contribution to the welfare of our community in various fields. In the non-Zoroastrian list we could include Western as well as Eastern and Iranian scholars who did valuable work in the cause of spreading the knowledge of our religion.

My second suggestion is that on our communal and religious occasions, whenever we pray two "Yatha Ahu Vairyo" and one "Ashem Vohu", we could extend it by a communal affirmation. It will greatly help us in developing a feeling of harmony and trust within the community. The affirmation could read something like this:

"We who have gathered here, affirm our unity in search for truth and understanding.

We wish to live with one another and not be unduly concerned by any difference of views or beliefs that we may have.

We would love alike even when we do not think alike; to be one at heart, even though not of one opinion.

We would like to go forward together in love and harmony and look with respect and reverence upon all the teachings given to us by our Prophet Zarathushtra and make them a binding force in our lives. To that end we will pray and study Gathas, His Holy Songs.

We believe that unity is not one common identity but a loving acceptance of diversity of individual beliefs and practices.

We believe that in this way we can build a foundation upon which to build peacefully a Universal Zoroastrian Brotherhood.

And we commit ourselves to this ideal."

Thank you for your attendance and patient hearing.

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Seven Keys to the Kingdom of God

(A talk given by Mr. Cyrus P. Mehta on the occasion of Khordad Sal Humbandagi held at Zoroastrian House, London, on 3rd September, 1970)

We have gathered here to remember and pay homage to our Prophet Zarathushtra whose birthday falls today. Of course, no one knows for certain when he was born. However, we have traditionally observed *Farvardin Mah and Khordad Roj* to be the Prophet's birthday. So I am happy to welcome you one and all who have come here today to keep a date with the Prophet.

In the last few years, a few of us have compiled and presented to you *Humbandagi* in a form that would appeal to your heart as well as strengthen your faith in the Religion which Prophet Zarathushtra preached thousands of years ago. In today's service we present you with that aspect of religion which is difficult to comprehend. Unless we know the answers, we cannot impart to the younger generation our kind of faith and as to why we hold fast to certain beliefs.

When a child asks us "Where is God?" our usual reply is perhaps "High up in the sky". A child is incapable of grasping the concept of God and it would be futile to explain any further. However, a child grows up and reaches a stage when he or she is not prepared to accept conventional thinking or beliefs. It is at this time that we need knowledge and ability to communicate with them. This is not easy but all the same it remains our duty to be able to do this. Hence the subject of today's Service.

Please note the practice of "Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds", is a moral injunction, and does not constitute the whole of Zoroastrian Religion. Religion means man's personal relationship with God. Any number of

ethical codes can be thought of and practised but by themselves they cannot satisfy yearnings of the human heart which cries out for something more than a few commandments.

Having said this much, let me straight away come to the main subject of this evening's service, *viz.* "**Seven Keys to the Kingdom of God**". I will name the keys by their *Avestan* names designated by the Prophet himself and then consider them in turn. I am using the word key because it is a simple word and also very significant. We are eternally looking for a secret treasure behind the locked door, and without the key we cannot get at the treasure. These keys are Zarathushtra's gift to mankind, so let us see how they open the doors of the Kingdom of God.

In any religion there is a starting point, the fundamental on which the Prophet builds the edifice of his religion. Zarathushtra's starting point is *Asha* and this is **Key No.1**. Zarathushtra enjoins upon us to do the right thing in scorn of consequence. But how to know what is right? Zarathushtra therefore lays down the principle.

"USHTA HAMAI USTHA KAHMAI CHIT."

"He who brings light to others himself gets light."

Stated in simpler terms it means "that alone is good for one own self which is good for all."

Having stated the principle, Zarathushtra points out that *Vohu Mano*, the Good Mind, or Conscience, is the faculty which states forth the above principle. In *Vohu Mano* we find all embracing love. In it there is no place for "Mine and Thine". Thus by excluding selfishness, *Vohu Mano* grows within us and we begin to realise what God's gifts are. So, *Vohu Mano* is **Key Number 2**.

Now we come to the difficult part. We know what is right, we also know the faculty which points it out to us, but how are we to carry out these principles in practice? How many times we have heard the expression or have said it ourselves when caught out for our weakness, that "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." This then is the tragedy of mankind. "We suffer because we sin and we sin because we fear to suffer." Zarathushtra therefore teaches us to overcome this fear by *Kshatrem*. This then is **Key No.3**. There is not much good in knowing what is right unless one has strength to pursue it. Zarathushtra in his Gathas repeatedly prays for *Kshatrem*.

So far we have talked about three keys, *Asha*, *Vohu Mano*, and *Kshatrem*, which belong to the ethical sphere. Ethical means relating to morality or duty. We now come to the 4th key which is an introductory to the higher categories of religion (viz. Soul, Absolute and God). This 4th key is called *Armaiti*. But this and other keys we will consider after we have prayed Hymns 1, 2, and 3, which have been selected to emphasise the points considered so far.

PRAYING OF HYMNS 1, 2 & 3

As I said earlier on, *Armaiti* is an introductory key. We often hear the expression that religion is a matter of faith or belief. And so it is, but it is certainly not a blind belief. Prophets spent a lifetime finding out truth about existence of Soul and God, and *Armaiti* asks us to give due weight to their teachings and experiences. If after proper experiment a person finds that what the Prophets teach about Soul and God is mere fabrication then he or she is entitled to disbelieve. Our tragedy is that without learning, without experimenting people turn away from God and their Religions. Their minds are so taken up with material things that they cannot be bothered to find time for learning or experimenting. Why should they, when it is so easy to disbelieve and indulge in acquiring material wealth and pursue the pleasures of life.

So *Armaiti* is merely a provisional belief till such time we have advanced to a stage of mental and spiritual development and we ourselves have experienced the truth and reality of the teachings of the Prophets. Beliefs that *Armaiti* want us to adopt provisionally are *Haurvatat* and *Ameretat* - belief in one's own soul, and belief in the world soul.

In every one of us there is the possibility of higher consciousness - a consciousness that is higher than that of mind. We all know that our mental consciousness entirely depends upon the sense of our physical organs; without eyes we cannot see, without ears we cannot hear. But the Yogis who have developed soul-consciousness do not rely on physical senses. This higher consciousness or Superamental Consciousness is a fact of life and not mere fiction. It can be developed if a person is ready for it and is prepared to devote a major part of his life seeking it. The fact that there is something like Superamental Consciousness which does not need our physical senses has a stupendous implication. It means that consciousness can exist irrespective of physical form. In other words what we call soul can survive death.

You may well say "All right so the soul survives after death, what good is that to me." And I fully agree that the promise of immortality is unreal and meaningless until it is shown that such a state is consistent within the scheme of the Universe.

Zarathushtra found that there is a Fundamental Reality lying at the root of its manifold objects. It is the Eternal Principle wherefrom the Universe arises, wherein it subsists and whereto it returns on dissolution. Zarathushtra gives this Eternal Principle the name of *Vahma*; Hindus call it *Brahma*. Belief in *Vahma* is very important. For without there being an Eternal Principle, all talk about immortality is bound to end in smoke. Therefore, belief in one's own soul and belief in the world soul or *Vahma* are basic facts. These then are the **5th** and **6th Keys** known in *Gathas* as *Hauvatat* and *Ameretat*.

Thousands of years later Islam took them over and described them as angels under the names of *Harut* and *Marut*.

We now come to the 7th key which is *Saroshem* (or Love of God). The idea of God is difficult to comprehend. Is God Impersonal or Personal? Zarathushtra does not stop at Impersonal God. He proceeds from *Vahma* to *Mazda* or Personal God. *Vahma* is a Principle and *Mazda* is a Person.

A Principle goes its own way, unmindful of the effect of its activities on others. Whereas a Person takes note of the existence of other persons. A best example I could give is that of traffic lights at crossroads. Lights go on changing at regular intervals and at times it so happens that a long queue of cars pile up because there is a heavy traffic in one direction and very little in the other. Bring in a Traffic Control Warden or a Policeman and he soon sizes up the situation. He takes notice of the harassed and tired motorists and traffic starts moving again.

Brahma or *Vahma* is the God of Philosophy and *Mazda* or *Ahura Mazda* is the God of Religion. The human heart is not satisfied with a God who is equally indifferent to praise or blame and who is not moved in the least by agonies of His creation. Man is in need of a God who could respond to his prayers and come to his aid. But please do not think for one moment that a Personal God is therefore the product of wishful thinking. The experience of the mystics all over the world attests the reality of a Personal God. Both are equally true and the man of *Armaiti* would not dismiss the idea as wishful thinking without making an experiment for himself.

What I have stated so far, I hope will not be taken as a mere academic discussion. Zarathushtra's solution that God can be both Impersonal and Personal has a direct bearing on the utility of the Religion itself. Without a metaphysical basis i.e. without the conception of *Brahma* in the background, religion degenerates into superstition, and without the conception of

God as the immediate object of worship, religion remains barren.

These seven keys to the Kingdom of God are also keys to the understanding of Gathas - the Songs that our Prophet Zarathushtra wrote. Though I have described them as Keys, in fact, the first six Keys are *Amesha Spentas*. In verse after verse you will find reference to them.

So let us end this Service by praying Hymns 4, 5 and 6.

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ADDENDUM

The philosophy of the *Amesha Spentas* or the Holy Immortals (as found in the Gathas – the Songs of Prophet Zarathushtra) has been presented by many scholars by considering the *Amesha Spentas* as attributes or divine aspects of *Ahura Mazda* or God.

In this talk, I took the opportunity of presenting a different version of the philosophy of the *Amesha Spentas*, as expounded in the book “The Hymns of Athravan Zarathushtra” by the late Jatrintra Mohan Chatterji, an outstanding Bengali scholar of Zoroastrian religion.

For my part, I consider both the versions of the philosophy of the *Amesha Spentas* as tenable.

Cyrus P. Mehta.

F A R O H A R S**By****Cyrus P Mehta**

The purpose of my talk this evening is to place before you in as simple language as possible some ideas as to:-

Who are Farohars?

What are their functions?

Why we remember them at the time of Mukta?

It would not be possible to go into all the aspects of this very important element in our religion. If after this talk, you feel interested and your curiosity is aroused to learn something more about the subject by reading the books written on them, I for one will feel satisfied that the object of this talk has been achieved.

The word Farohar is a Pahlavi word and perhaps more commonly used than its equivalent word Fravashi in Avesta. Though we speak of Farohar as a separate entity, we must bear in mind that the term is merely used to mean Divine Spark or the Essence of Divinity indwelling in each and every object of Creation, including man.

God having created the Universe has not allowed it to go to rack and ruin. He has preserved His creations and this he has done by every object of creation having a Fravashi or Farohar. You have one, I have one, trees have them and the birds have them. And the purpose of these Farohars is to push forward all creations in the goal of evolution. This is gradually taking shape with the passing of each day by the help of Farohars and therefore Farohar is the most valuable element in man.

We have seen that Farohar means Divine Essence of God within us. So to a greater or lesser degree man possesses the same Divine Attributes that God possesses. It is for this reason it is said that 'Man is made in the image of God.'

However this does not prevent man from being subjected to the Divine Law of Asha. The entire Law of birth, growth, decay and death is founded on this Law of Asha and man must follow this path.

In creating man, God has granted him a free will. In Avesta we say man has an Urvan or Soul. Ahura Mazda has said, "Be good or base; the choice is yours." Man can therefore only reap what he sows. This brings us straight to the problem of evil. It is logical to ask, if man has Farohar within him to guide aright, why does he descend into evil ways.

The explanation given by our religion is that side by side with Fravashi or Farohar, man has a soul which has been given inherent freedom of choice. Farohar within is fully able to guide the soul aright in each and every thought word and deed but it will never stand against the choice of soul or 'Urvan'.

We may then well ask how is soul to be helped by Farohar. The answer given in our texts is that it is the duty of soul in making its choice to invoke the aid of Farohar in every thought word and deed. It is only when this guidance is asked that Farohar steps in the matter of choice and guides the soul, but still leaving the final choice to soul.

Now we come to the question, "Can Farohars help the wicked or those that are not true to themselves?" Many a Zoroastrian has lost faith in his religion when he discovered that he gains no benefit of any kind despite all the daily prayers he offers to God. God's aid cannot be bargained for and therefore God's essence can be of little aid to man's soul when the soul is impure in thoughts, words and deeds. It is because of this that so much emphasis is laid on Purity, Righteousness, Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. Again and again it is said, "There is but one path and that path is of Asha or Righteousness."

But man is eternally forgetful of this divine precept. His soul, enmeshed in materialism, drifts into chaos and sinfulness. No amount of empty prayers and ceremonies can ever change the course of the Divine Law of Asha. "We reap as we sow." But punishment of this law is not eternal. The soul can proceed towards the Path of Asha by sincere repentance and willingness not to descend into evil ways. In Hormazd Khodai prayer, we pray:

"Az hama gunah patet pashemanum",
meaning "From all my sins I repent and turn back."

"Okhe avakhsh pasheman pa se gavashni pa patet hom", meaning "O Lord! with sincere contrition I repent with three-fold renunciation."

The entire Kusti prayer from "Kemna Mazda" to "Jasme Avanghe Mazda" is perfectly well arranged and balanced to lead any devotee to an invocation of the indwelling Spirit of God in man — Farohar. I hope this little explanation will give you understanding of a Daily Prayer said in every Zoroastrian house. There is only one way to realise Him and His Divine Spirit within one's own heart.

Farohar is the only holy link between man and God. As God transcends His creation, so does Farohar transcend man. (Transcend means to excel, going beyond the bounds of human knowledge.) At death Farohar leaves the body in which it had worked and the soul is thereafter under the control and surveillance of "Spenta Mainyu" or "The Bountiful Spirit of Ahura Mazda".

The word "Spenta Mainyu" is very important in Zoroastrian Theology. However, I do not propose to talk about it today. As a matter of passing interest, I may mention that just as in Christian religion, there is a holy Trinity of God, Son, and the Holy Ghost, a more or less similar Trinity exists in our religion made up of "Ahura Mazda", "Spenta Mainyu" and the "Farohars".

Three Groups of Farohars

In order that we may better understand the nature of work done by the Farohars, in Farvardin Yasht we are told that there are three groups of Farohars.

Group 1. The Farohars that are inherent in human beings and in all creations of Ahura Mazda in His vast Universe. Zoroastrianism teaches the world that their special purpose is to promote the advancement of God's creation towards a fixed goal called "Frashogard" or "Renovation".

Group 2. The Farohars that work on spiritual plane and which come to aid of human beings on physical plane, only when invoked.

The Farvardin Yasht speaks of a very essential requirement concerning the person invoking Farohars of Group 2. Such a person is expected to be pure in heart and wholly righteous. The Farohars which are of the Essence of Ahura are not going to be cheated by an empty insincere set of prayers to come to the aid of living unless and until the supplicant is truly and sincerely earnest. Further he should be fit to receive or is capable of assimilating the reward or assistance to be derived from the Farohars of Group 2 whom he seeks to invoke to his aid from the spiritual plane.

Group 3. The Farohars of Asho that approach the domains of the living on the physical plane during ten days of Farverdegan, irrespective of their being invoked or not.

They come in spirit of joyfulness. They expect to find genuine reverence and worship paid to them by those who are living here below; not by mere lip service but in acts of offerings that give forth the perfume of noble thoughts. Their mission is to pour their benedictions upon the "power of righteousness that pervades the earth."

We now come to the third and the last part of this talk - Why we remember Farohars at the time of Muktdad.

Throughout the year one's soul remains enamoured of its material surroundings and pays little or no concern for its spiritual uplift. Thus man lives and dies a rank materialist, expecting his relatives to perform religious rites after his death for the spiritual advancement or repose of his soul.

To prevent this ever-recurring tide of spiritual degradation of those who do not invoke the Farohars of Group 1, and those who are not spiritually fitted to invoke the Farohars of Group 2, merciful God sends down the Farohars of Group 3. These Farohars come at the end of the year and before the beginning of the next year at appropriate time to quicken the hearts of the living towards the spiritual upliftment.

There is not a home in the whole world where death of some relative has not taken place and so at this period of the year the living beings expect the presence of the Farohars of their departed relatives. Since Fravashi of a person is always divine in essence, at times the departed ones are spoken of or considered as "Asho". I hope this will answer the point raised by some Zoroastrians that "how can you regard a departed person as Asho even though his life on this earth was not a righteous one?" We must remember that we are invoking the Fravashis of the departed ones.

The offerings made to Farohars of the Asho at this special time becomes a communal affair rather than a ceremonial of a few individuals. For this reason it is desirable that in each city there should be a central spot where all Zoroastrians can assemble at a given time for their conjoint reverence and adoration of Farohars that come. The duty evolves on each person to make his or hers genuine "Behroo" (a gift in money, service or kind) at these ceremonies.

In this way there is a tide that turns in the normal affairs of the material-minded men. They halt in their worldly activities and invoke their God and His Ameshas. By attending the ceremonies and talks that are organised on these days they are helped to understand the spiritual side of human nature. Thus the year ends with each individual striving to make a truce with his conscience, striving to understand Ahura Mazda and His Ameshas and thus to see how Farohars of Group 3 who are "invisible and all pervading" can help to promote spirituality among men.

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United Kingdom.*

30th June 1977.

Note:- This talk was given by me several years ago at "Zoroastrian House", London.

Please preserve this copy or make additional ones for the benefit of Zoroastrians who may wish to have a better understanding of their noble faith.

A CATECHISM ON THE "SIGNIFICANCE OF MUKTAD".

Question 1:

Give the derivation of the word "Muktad".

Answer:

The word Muktad is derived from the Sanskrit Word, "Mukta Atma".

Question 2:

Give the equivalent word in Avesta for the word Muktad.

Answer:

Farverdegan.

Question 3:

To which language does the word "Farohar" belong?

Answer:

"Pahlavi".

Question 4:

To which language does the word "Fravashi" belong?

Answer:

"Avesta".

Question 5:

What do the words "Farohar" or "Fravashi" signify?

Answer:

They mean Divine Spark or Essence of Divinity indwelling in each and every object of Creation including human beings.

Question 6:

How does God look after His Creation?

Answer:

By giving a Fravashi to each and every object within the Universe.

Question 7:

What special faculty has God given to human beings which He has not given to others.

Answer:

Free will or freedom to choose.

Question 8:

Which element in man exercises this freedom?

Answer:

Urvan or Soul.

Question 9:

What should soul do before exercising its freedom to choose?

Answer:

Invoke the aid of Fravashi through sincere prayers and at the same time repenting for mistakes committed.

Question 10:

Which path Zoroastrianism stresses in order to make spiritual progress?

Answer:

The Path of Righteousness.

Question 11:

How is this path mentioned in Zoroastrian Scriptures?

Answer:

"There is but one path and that path is of Asha or Righteousness; all other paths are no paths."

Question 12:How many groups of Farohars are there according to "Farvardin Yasht"?

Answer:

Three.

Question 13:

How are these groups described?

Answer:

Group 1 consists of Farohars that are inherent in all creations including human beings.

Group 2 consists of Farohars who work on spiritual plane but come to aid of human beings when invoked by righteous persons.

Group 3 consists of Farohars who come at the time of Muktdad or Farvardegan, whether invoked or not, to pour their benedictions upon the "power of Righteousness that pervades the earth".

Question 14:

What are the main benefits of observing days of Farverdegan or Muktdad?

Answer

- (i) To get away from material aspects of our daily living for a short time.
- (ii) Be open to receive material and spiritual blessings brought to the world by Farohars of Group 3.
- (iii) To provide us with an opportunity to think about our departed ones whom we tend to forget with the passage of time.
- (iv) To make truce with our conscience and resolve not to repeat the same mistakes in the forthcoming year.

EXTRACTS FROM FARVARDIN YASHT**Farohars of Group 1:-**

Kardo XXII (74):- "We revere the innate thoughts, the religion and the souls of the Soshyants. We revere tame animals, we revere savage animals, we revere those that live in water, we revere those that fly in the air, we revere the flying birds, we revere the animals that wander wild at large, we revere the cloven hoofed animals, we revere their fravashis."

Kardo XXII (79):- "We revere all waters, we revere all trees, we revere all the righteous, good, powerful, beneficent fravashis. We revere the waters by name, we revere the trees by name, we revere the righteous good powerful beneficent fravashis by name."

Farohars of Group 2:-

Kardo II (24):- "Who are givers of victory when invoked, givers of boon to the lover, givers of health to a sick person, givers of this good glory to this rejoicing invoker who bringing sacred offerings righteously invokes."

Kardo II (25):- "Who are most forward near to wherever there are righteous men most devoted to righteousness, wherever most highly revered, wherever the righteous are not offended."

Farohars of Group 3:-

Kardo XIII (49):- "We revere the righteous, good, powerful, beneficent fravashis. Who come to the families at the time of Hamaspathmaedaem; there they pass their life for 10 nights all round desiring this much support."

Kardo XIII (50):- "Who will praise us, who will revere us, who will sing the glory, who will offer prayer, who will receive us, with pure hands and respect; through the prayer which takes on to righteousness. Who will invoke us by name, who from you will widely invoke, who will bestow gifts to us that will assist us to shine unflinching for ever and ever."

Farohars of righteous persons of all countries are invoked:-

Kardo XXXI (143):- "We revere the fravashis of righteous men of Aryan countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of Aryan countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous men and women of Turanian countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous men of Sairim (Syrian) countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of Sairim (Syrian) countries."

Kardo XXXI (144):- "We revere the fravashis of righteous men of Saini (China) countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of Saini (China) countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous men of Dahi countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of Dahi countries. (These countries are supposed to be to the east of Caspian Sea where brave wandering tribes once lived.)

Kardo XXXI (145):-"We revere the fravashis of righteous men of all countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of all countries. We revere all the fravashis of the righteous good, powerful, beneficent fravashis - those from Gayomard to the victorious Soshyant.

UNSEEN HELPERS, BEINGS OF LIGHT

*A talk given by Mr. Cyrus P. Mehta at a Conference
held under the auspices of The World Spiritual
Council at Acacia House, Central Avenue, Acton Vale,
London W3 JX on Saturday, 27th September, 1975.*

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My talk this afternoon broadly falls into three sections. In the first part we will consider the role of symbols — specially fire, in the second the role of religion and in the last part the subject of Hidden Helpers. The first two are related to and necessary to develop the theme of the Conference. Needless to say I will be presenting all the three aspects from the Zoroastrian point of view.

Part 1.

Man has been generally defined as a thinking or a rational being and occasionally as a religious or worshipping being. Of all the creatures, man alone has the instinct of "binding" himself to some invisible powers. And strangely enough the instinct can be unmistakably traced in the saint as well as the primitive. And it may be asked, through what channel does the religious instinct become manifest? Oddly enough here again the saint and the primitive join hands. For they both require an identical medium for evoking the highest feelings with which the Creator has separately endowed them. And what is this wonderful medium? It is simply a SYMBOL.

A symbol is an appealing impact-making visible object by means of which man extends down into the infinite depth of the Invisible. It is from this invisible something from which his own visible self has emerged. Prophet Zarathushtra obviously understood the philosophy of symbolism. He looked deeply for a long time into the sacred fire that was burning before him and then delivered one

of the world's best sermon. He said, "I will now tell you, who are assembled here, the wise sayings of Mazda , the praise of Ahura,the hymns of good spirit and sublime truth which I see arising out of these sacred flames. ... You shall therefore hearken to the soul of nature; contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind! Every one, both men and women, ought today must choose his creed. Ye offsprings of renowned ancestors, awake to agree with us."

The most important sentence for the purpose of our talk this afternoon is "Contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind."

A sceptic can only look at the fire and see in it the glowing combustion of chemical atoms and gases but the man with a discerning mind sees in it much more than a mere chemical reaction.

All of us do not possess the illumined minds of the prophets but most of us are capable of love and worship. So a Zoroastrian trustingly obeys the first command of his prophet and contemplates the beams of fire with a most pious mind.

The first thing he notices is that it always burns upwards and therefore he is encouraged to lift his own thoughts upwards and nearer to the mystical heart of Universal Life. The second fact he notices is that the fire is the most living of the four elements of the nature. The air, water and earth look more or less dead when compared to the fire. Without the heat of the fire they lack vitality.

Thus Fire is the best element to symbolise the principle attribute of God as Life-Giver or Creator. The third fact he notices is its coalescing tendency. Take the separate chips of sandalwood — the Zoroastrians burn sandalwood in their fire temples — and each of them has flame of its own. But put all of them on the censer and that instant their separate flames co-mingle into one broad soaring flame. This manifestation should remind us that whilst the essence of matter is separateness, that of the spirit is oneness.

In the Bible we find, Lord Christ saying, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you."

(John xiv,20)

In the Bhagwad Gita, Lord Krishna says, "I am the same to all mankind; - they who serve me with adoration, I am in them and they are in me."

(Gita Lec.ix)

The fourth fact that a Zoroastrian notices is that the fire purifies all that it touches. When the flame touches the chips of wood, they change their form. From a merely packed mass of dried binding cells they take a subtler form. The original matter has now changed into vanishing gas. Thus the fire is emblematic of the divine attribute of purity. Indirectly it also typifies Divine Justice. There is nothing too high nor too low in the eyes of God. Likewise there is nothing too pure or polluted for the warm purifying embrace of fire. Nothing can ever pollute fire and in the end it will be physically as pure as it was before the impure matter was thrown into it.

The fifth fact a Zoroastrian notices as he gazes at the fire, is that by its ceaseless movement as well by its continuously changing the nature of all that it touches, it visibly manifests the eternal change that pervades the Universe.

And finally a Zoroastrian looks at the fire as a symbol of God. Fire has moved the heart and stirred the imagination of the most civilised races of men to a pitch as no other visible object has ever done. The Egyptians had a fire burning day and night in every one of their temples. The Greeks and Romans had likewise a fire burning in all their towns and villages. The Mexicans and Peruvians had their national fires burning upon large pyramids. The so called "eternal lamps" that are seen in some Byzantine and Catholic churches are further evidences of the hold which fire always had over the heart and imagination of man. The most sacred spot in Rome was the "Regia" on which stood the Temple

of Vesta, where the sacred fire burned day and night. In the Hellenic Isles all civil and political interests grouped themselves around the Prytaneion, which was at once a temple, a tribunal and a town-hall. In the heroic days of ancient India we hear of the sage Vasishta, offering "gifts to lighted Agni (fire) with careful hand", or a Brahmin reciting the verse "--ancient priest of the lunar race, lights the Fire, with pious offering seeks its blessings and its grace."

So when we contemplate the beams of Fire with a most pious mind, we ask is there something more to it than the truest symbol of God. What is that something which makes so many turn to the Fire, the Sun, the Moon and the Stars when they worship them and offer their heartfelt prayers. That something is LIGHT. And what is God? GOD is Light and so are unseen helpers beings of light.

Some eighty years ago, Bishop Neurin of the Roman Catholics in Bombay wrote in one of his pamphlets, a few succinct sentences which I think are worthy of recalling here. He wrote, "Zoroaster restored not only the unity of God but also the most ancient characteristic Aryan form of divine service, The Worship of Fire, as the most suitable representative of God, corresponding to their high idea of God as Eternal Light. A pure and undefiled flame is certainly most sublime natural representation of Him who is Himself Eternal Light."

As his church was near a Parsi Fire Temple, he further wrote, "In both we see a Perpetual Flame indicating the Presence of God; there the omnipresence of God the creator; here the omnipresence of God the Redeemer. I am unable to express in words the deep and vehement feelings which move my heart when I kneel in the sanctuary of my chapel and think of the Parsi Fire-temple a few yards off in which a fire is burning like the flame in our sanctuary lamp. Here is one of the similarities justly said to exist between Parsi and Christian religions."

An American once asked the great Tolstoy, "Is Christ indeed your master, and do you think of him as divine?" Tolstoy replied, "Christ brings me to light. He may be God, He may be Man, He may be both, but I see God through Him." Likewise if a Zoroastrian is asked, "Do you think the Light in your sacred Fire as Divine?", he would reply, "Fire brings me to my Creator. It may be God. It may be mechanical effect. It may be both, but I SEE GOD THROUGH THE LIGHT IN THE FIRE."

So let us consider this Light. The Zoroastrian word for God is Ahura Mazda meaning Lord of Life and Wisdom. We also say that Ahura Mazda's body is Light and His spirit Truth. Due to inevitable and all pervading presence of light in every atom, Prophet Zarathushtra has stamped it divine and has exhorted man to adore the Source of Reservoir of Light and Life viz. Ahura Mazda. In his songs called "Gathas", Zarathushtra offers beautiful thoughts about Light, Love, Truth, Inner Flame and so on and guides us on the Path of Righteousness. Time will not permit me to go into details so I will offer a few relevant verses for your consideration.

The Birth of Creation is Enveloped in Light.

"He through His Holy Word did first declare:
His LIGHT shall stream through all the Lights on high:
Himself, All-wise, the Law of Truth declared:
That this HIS LIGHT might glow as LOVE supreme:
Make it blaze higher, Mazda, through the Grace
Of thine own Spirit, evermore the same."

(Yasna 31.7)

Holy Fire is an active agent and a deciding factor in the affairs of man.

"Who hears the Truth and lives it in his life,
Soul-healing Lord of Wisdom he becomes;
To spread true Teaching, Ahura, his words

Are eloquent and able to convince;
 O Mazda, through thy Fire, blazing clear,
 Unto each man his place do Ye assign."

(Yasna 31.19)

From the outward Fire we turn to the Inner Flame or fire.

Thine INNER FIRE, Ahura, to see
 We yearn, - He blazes mightily through Truth,
 He has thy strength; Our Goal and Hope is He,
 But, Mazda in the hearts of the Infidels
 He sees the hidden evil at a glance."

(Yasna 34.4)

The Light we are talking about is not something vague and sentimental but something positive, intelligent and helpful in life.

"From Realms above, O Mazda Ahura,
 Blessings pour down upon Thy Singer's head;
 These promised blessings come in shape or help;
 This is Thy gesture, answering my song,
 This help that bears me upward to Thy Light."

(Yasna 50.5)

So if we want a worthwhile life we should value and venerate this light.

"Thou art Divine, I know, O Lord Supreme,
 Since Good found entrance to my heart through Love,
 I asked: What is Thy Holy Will? To whom
 Daily my utmost homage shall I pay?

Since then unto Thine INNER FLAME I pay
 My homage and to Thine Eternal Law."

(Yasna 43.9)

(GATHA Verses - the late Dr. I.J.S. Taraporevala's translation)

Part 2

Let us now consider the second part, namely the role of Religion in a man's life. This is a vast subject; so we can establish only a few points here today. One may wonder what has Religion got to do with the subject of Hidden Helpers. There are two reasons why we should consider it. The first is nothing exists in isolation; everything is inter-related. The second is only a man of religion is likely to believe, look forward to and obtain help and guidance from the unseen helpers.

The most essential element of a sublime religion is the cultivation of whole hearted trust and love towards God; and this element is manifested by the sublime personality of the spiritual leaders, called prophets and saviours of humanity.

Religion differs from science and scientific knowledge in this, that religion does not merely illumine one's understanding with the light of Reason, but it sublimates and strengthens one's will to find its true goal. It further directs one's efforts to attain that Ultimate End, the Union with Ahura Mazda or God. Religion as we saw earlier is the natural urge of mankind, by which one surveys various faculties, tendencies and powers of one's soul and find that they are required to be developed to bear testimony to the TRUTH. This religious search by one's own reason, unfolds the ideas which uplift one's own soul to the Unknown Divinity. That is the consequent result of this religious urge. It makes the soul aspire for this constant communion of the Highest Divinity by researches into the physical and metaphysical spheres.

This religious urge also awakens the conscience of mankind. Hence Zoroastrianism teaches that conscience is the true spiritual faculty of the soul, tending to religious research. Its convictions of right and wrong, good and evil, are inspired by the idea of a Divine Authority more powerful than man's. The awakened conscience develops the

faculty of intuition that inspired Zarathushtra and his followers to admire nature; and made them adore the resplendent Sun, the Moon, the Stars and various other objects like fire, light, mother earth, rivers, oceans and vegetable kingdoms and ultimately enabled them to perceive the One Infinite Reality pervading all forms and the phenomena in nature. Zoroastrian religion further teaches to cultivate one's conscience for right conduct with skill in actions in all departments of life - social, political, economical, commercial and spiritual. Thus mankind guided by intuitive reason is enabled to think rightly and to regulate manners and customs of society, for the social growth and well being of all.

One of the boons a Zoroastrian asks whilst praying in front of the Fire is:-

"Grant me O Fire, Son of Ahura Mazda, off-spring with inborn wisdom, rising to perfection, able to rule over lands and guide assemblies, harmonious in growth and active in work, delivering from bondage and high aspiring who shall advance the progress of our home, of our village and of our province, of our country and who shall make brighter the honour of our land."

In Zoroastrianism there is no running away from life. A man must work diligently in every sphere of life with awakened conscience and intuition and dedicate his work to Ahura Mazda without any thought of material gain and worldly honours. It is such a man who is most likely to receive the full benefit of blessings from Unseen Helpers.

Having spent an active life in the service of God, a time comes when a man dies. What next after death, is a logical question to a man who wants to know.

The belief in survival of soul after death in an invisible spiritual world and in a judgement and recompense in that world, is found

among different people. Next to the faith in Nature and Being of God, the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul of Man lies at the foundation of all religions. If we remove the belief of a future state and the hope of immortality, then religion becomes a mere shadow, life a dream, aspiration mere fantasy and the approach of death a scene of darkness and despair. Upon this mute question, "Is Man immortal or not?" depends all that is valuable in Religion, Philosophy, Science and Psychology and that is interesting to man as a social, logical, moral and spiritual being. If man is destined to a future existence, an immense importance must attach to all present thoughts, words, deeds, pursuits and aspirations. But suppose his whole existence is circumscribed within the narrow circle of a few fleeting years of three score and ten, then man must appear an enigma, human life a mystery, the world a scene of confusion, virtue a mere phantom and the Creator a capricious Being with no laws or plans.

In Zoroastrianism, life after death and the existence of a spiritual world and survival of soul after death are positively stated. So with this knowledge of Religion and having understood the significance of Fire and Light let us embark on the subject of Unseen Helpers, entitled "Fravashi" in Zoroastrian scriptures.

Part 3

God having created the Universe has not allowed it to go to rack and ruin. He has preserved his creations by ensuring that every object of his creation has a "Fravashi". "Fravashi" basically means Divine Spirit or the Essence of Divinity dwelling in each and every object of creation including man. You have one, I have one, trees have them and the birds have them. And the purpose of these "Fravashis" is to push forward all creations in the goal of evolution. This is gradually taking place with the passing of each day with the help of the "Fravashis" or Hidden Helpers. For this reason, the Fravashi is the most valuable element in man.

The unique feature of the Zoroastrian religion lies in its spiritual philosophy of the two principles in man, Urvan or Soul, which is the realised part of Self and the Fravashi which is the Universal Divine Essence of the Total Self. Urvan or Soul is non-material and is sent to earth to fight the battle in this world and hasten the day of redemption. Urvan has a free choice in man but when it leaves the body it is held responsible for its thoughts, words and deeds performed whilst in the body. Whatever wrongs are committed by the body, soul is held responsible for this. The whole structure of Zoroastrian philosophy is based on the belief in freedom of thought and inherent ability of man to choose right or wrong through the activity of his soul.

The soul under pressure from the material existence becomes restless in the yearnings for an inner revelation and deliverance from the bondage of limitations in the matter. The soul being the chooser is faced with the heavy responsibility of making its decisions regarding the puzzling questions. It is still overshadowed by a doubt as to ultimate triumph of Truth and Good in the midst of Falsehood and Wickedness. Under such conditions, soul is unable to comprehend the larger ramifications of the Divine Plan of God and seeks an immediate temporal result by praying for the grace, love and guidance of Ahura Mazda or God. To imagine that one can comprehend his soul through intellect only is to be under an illusion of absurd assumption. Modern man has conquered his outer physical world but not the inner spiritual world. And this situation has arisen because modern man will not listen to or believe in the words of the prophets.

A few days ago I was reading the biography of Dr. Roseveare who went as a missionary to Belgian Congo. Of her early days when she was trying desperately to master the dogmas and theology of Christianity, her biographer writes -

"On the last evening she got into vehement argument with her associates defending her concept of Christianity. As she argued she realized that their theology was miles ahead of hers; that she did not know enough or understand enough; that too much was mystery. She lost the thread of her argument and left close to tears. In her room she threw herself on her bed and wept in despair and loneliness. Then she raised her reddened eyes to the large printed text of a psalm on the wall. She had not taken it in before, though she must have read it a hundred times. BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Eight small words which thrust like a searchlight through her despair. Suddenly she understood that it was not possible to understand intellectually. Not as you would work out an equation. To rationalize, analyse, deduce and conclude were the activities of the brain and computer. Belief was a colour unseen in their spectrum." Thus it was that light dawned on Helene Roseveare. Her first contact with God was through a psalm on the wall of a bedroom in Ealing not far from the place where we have assembled here today. So many others have made their contacts in a similar manner and will do so eternally.

Just as there are degrees and stages of development in physical, mental and intellectual spheres, so are there various spheres and stages of spiritual evolution and unfoldment. Prophets and Saints who have developed their spiritual faculties of responding to Divine Forces at work in nature, are souls far advanced and much higher in strata than the souls of mankind in general. Geniuses and master minds differ from others in points of spiritual progress. Such advanced souls can have communications with God and His Hidden Helpers. Prophet Zarathushtra was one such Master and a perfect representative of God Himself. His religion aims at the sublimation of the will power of mankind, through the education based on the perception of Truth and acquisition of Divine Knowledge. Through his Divine Revelation mankind is made conscious of Supreme Benevolence of the Almighty Providence, which ultimately uplifts the human souls to become fit to be in tune with the Creator Himself.

Let us return to the subject of Fravashi. Earlier on I said that every man has a Fravashi within him. And the purpose of this Fravashi is to guide him aright. We may then well ask why does man descend into evil ways in spite of Fravashi being there to guide him. The answer to that question is that Fravashi, though fully capable of guiding the soul aright will not stand against the choice of soul. The latter can be helped by Fravashi only if the soul invokes the aid of Fravashi. It is only when this guidance is asked that the Fravashi steps into the matter of choice, but still leaving the final choice to the soul.

Let us go a step further. Can Fravashi help the wicked or those that are not true to themselves? I am afraid the answer is that the wicked can gain no benefit of any kind despite the daily prayers he may offer to God. God's aid cannot be bargained for when the soul is impure in thoughts, words and deeds. It is because of this that the Zoroastrian religion lays great emphasis on Purity, Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. Again and again it is said, "There is but one path and that path is of Asha or Righteousness". But man is eternally forgetful of this divine precept. His soul enmeshed in materialism drifts into chaos and sinfulness. No amount of empty prayers and ceremonies can ever change the course of the Divine Law of Asha. "We reap as we sow". But the punishment of breaking this law is not eternal. The soul can proceed towards the path of Asha by sincere repentance and a willingness not to descend into evil ways.

So during a man's life in this world, Fravashi is the holy link between him and God. It is upto him to invoke the help of Fravashi and we have already seen how he can do it. At death "Fravashi" leaves the body in which it had worked and the soul is thereonwards under the control and surveillance of "Spenta Mainyu" or "The Bountiful Spirit of Ahura Mazda".

The word "Spenta Mainyu" is very important in Zoroastrian Theology. There is a deep significance between Spenta Mainyu -the

Bountiful Spirit of God and "Ahunavar" the word of God. In Gathas, the songs written by Prophet Zarathushtra, at one place we are told, Ahura Mazda (God) first made the Great Thought and from there the active centres of light were created. Further in the act of creation, Ahura Mazda, Spenta Mainyu and Ahunavar were together. Please note the similarity of the concept with that of the Gospel - "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.". Thus Spenta Mainyu could be likened to Christos and Ahunavar with the Word.

Further, Spenta Mainyu along with Ahura Mazda and Fravashi also forms a Trinity. In Zoroastrian scriptures we find that:-

(1) Fravashi is the Essence of Divinity in man and every object of creation.

(2) Fravashi took its rise and origin from Spenta Mainyu the Bountiful Spirit of God, or Ahura Mazda.

(3) Spenta Mainyu was and is the Bountiful Spirit of God pervading the whole Universe.

(4) Ahura Mazda, Spenta Mainyu and Fravashi are coeval and same in essence as it were a sort of Trinitarian concept of the one and only God of the Universe.

(5) Though Ahura Mazda, Spenta Mainyu, and Fravashi are coeval and one in Divine Essence, they are referred to as functioning independently in order to impress upon our mind the vital and all important concept that Ahura Mazda is the creator and having created His Creation, He looks after it and maintains complete surveillance over His Creation and has control over it.

Talking about Spenta Mainyu brings to my mind another point. It is thought by some that we Zoroastrians believe in two equally powerful Gods, viz. Ahura Mazda and Ahereman, the first

representing the goodness and the second wickedness. This is totally untrue. The most profound psychology and subtle philosophy of polarity or relatively in human mind represented by Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood was in later times misunderstood and changed to mean something different. Prophet Zarathushtra's philosophy of the two Spirits or Mainyus was entirely based on ethical duality and the relatively of the human mind and not on theological dualism.

Let us now revert to our main subject of Fravashi. In order that we may better understand the nature of work done by the Fravashis, Zoroastrian scriptures tell us that there are three groups of Fravashis.

Group 1:- Consists of Fravashis that are inherent in human beings and in all creations of Ahura Mazda (God). As we have seen previously, their special purpose is to promote the advancement of God's Creations towards a fixed goal of Frashogard or Renovation.

Group 2:- Consists of Fravashis that work on spiritual plane and who come to the aid of human beings on the physical plane only when invoked. However there is a very special requirement concerning the person invoking the Fravashis of Group 2. Such a person is expected to be pure in heart and wholly righteous. The Fravashis which are the essence of Ahura are not going to be cheated by an empty insincere set of prayers to come to the aid of the living until the supplicant is truly sincere and earnest. Further, he should be fit to receive or be capable of assimilating the reward of assistance to be derived from the Fravashis of Group 2, whom he seeks to invoke to his aid from the spiritual plane.

Group 3:- Consists of the Fravashis of Asho or Righteous who approach the living on the physical plane during the last ten days of the Zoroastrian year, known as Farvardegan or Muktdad. They come down from the heavenly regions from the ethereal space like winged birds and give victory, strength and blessings to the good, virtuous

and holy. Thus cosmic forces become active in nature ten days before the vernal equinox, when the Universal Divine Impulse becomes strong for the reparation, purification and equilibrium of the universe. In nature seasons are important for the distribution of forces and cosmic currents. Spring is the time of birth, rejuvenation and spiritual awareness. So man must spiritually prepare himself and invoke his own Fravashi, becoming conscious of the Divine Presence within himself and ready to receive the blessings of these cosmic forces working in the Universe. When a man contacts his own Fravashi, he shares in the Universal Divine Consciousness.

So the spirit world or unseen helpers exist as much as the people on this earth. They guide us and protect us and are ready to help us all the times. They do work with great speed. They fly whilst we walk. They think fast and their work goes on at great speed. Our job is to be in tune with the spirit world. Their help can be invoked with prayer. They are eager to help. As said earlier in all matters Nature has left choice with us. If we have the right desire and seek the help of unseen helpers we shall get it. They do the work and we become the channel. To be a channel is a great privilege. For that one has to be alert, to be ready, to be willing to offer and to work assiduously. Only the very industrious can work for the Fravashis. It is the opportunity of a life-time to find this glorious link with the Divine Force. One can bow humbly and gratefully for it is truly a blessing from above.

It is possible and it should become normal to work alongside helpers. But they do not satisfy personal gains. They work for the welfare of humanity. Only those who devote time selflessly are the people who are needed and used by Unseen Helpers. But before we can become a channel for useful work we have to train our mind and body so that they are receptive and tuned to receive Divine Flow. The spirit world is as much eager to obtain the results as much as we are. The Universe is vast, so vast that one has no concept of the vastness of Nature. Do we give time to think of this vast project of

God? We seek jobs in offices or factories, but do we seek a post in this vast hemisphere? It would be very interesting if we did.

Science would progress by leaps and bounds if it would seek and co-operate with Nature; its efforts would be doubly rewarded and successful. Science is not alien to Nature; it is part of Nature. Only the scientist feels alien. Let him know and believe that he is one with Nature, for nothing exists without Divine Will. Let him shed some of his subconscious arrogance and he would achieve much more. These invisible helpers are there and work ceaselessly on our behalf.

Let the realization of Right Thought, Right Choice and Right Decision be made by mankind and rest will follow. No one is left out of the Divine Plan. Let us plan with knowledge, confidence and faith and then watch the results. They will be far more than you expected in your wildest imagination. Let us not clamour for minor joys and neglect the larger bliss. The path is not that difficult; it only seems so because we are surrounded by materialism; we have accepted material joys in preference to Divine Bliss. It is for us to choose.

To conclude this talk I can do no better than to quote the words of Prophet Zarathushtra, mentioned in the beginning of my talk. Prophets belong to the world and not necessarily to their own followers. "You shall therefore hearken to the soul of Nature; contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind. Every one both men and women ought today to choose his or her creed. Ye off-springs of renowned ancestors, awake to agree with us."

GATHA DAY SERMON KARACHI 15th MARCH 1984

By
Cyrus P. Mehta

One of the best definitions of Religion is: "It is that which binds man to man and man to God." To our great sorrow we know that in the name of Religion and God man has indulged in wars and performed evil deeds, quite contrary to the teachings of the Prophets.

The relationship between a person and God is an individual one. He or she can follow any path. But in daily living, relationship between human beings is of considerable importance. So this morning we will briefly consider this very important subject.

Whenever a Zoroastrian is asked about his religion, he replies, "My religion teaches me is to practise Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds", but seldom does he mention or talk about a very important sentence in our "Jasa-me-Avanghe" prayer. The sentence is "**Astuye Daenam Vanguhim Mazdayasnim, Fraspayokhedram, Nidhasnaithism, Khaetvadatham Ashaonim.**" meaning "I solemnly dedicate myself to the excellent religion of Mazda worship which removes quarrels, which removes strife and discord, which teaches self-sacrifice and which leads to Righteousness."

So along with "Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds" we have here four chief characteristics of our religion e.g.

- i. Unity in Diversity
- ii. Non-violence
- iii. Self-sacrifice
- iv. Principle of Righteousness

Time does not permit me to deal with all of them but we will consider how to practise ".Unity in Diversity".

Unity means making efforts to remove all discord and practising tolerance. A Zoroastrian is required to acquire magnanimity of mind so that he can listen to all manner of views without being disagreeable. It is humanly impossible to have similar views; even a husband and wife living together have different views regarding their domestic life. Whether it be a communal, national or religious matter, one must not be intolerant and assert one's views to be the right or correct one. Differences of opinions will always be there but this should not allow the community like ours to break up into small groups bearing different labels or create fights within the community. The community is too small to afford this kind of luxury. History has taught us to be adaptable to live with other major races in different parts of the world. But we have not applied the same trait as much as we should within the communal fold. We should heed the warning given by Prophet Mohammed to his followers in Holy Koran. "Do not split up your religion into sects each exulting in its own beliefs." (Al-Rum Sura 30).

So the first thing we can do to practise "Unity in Diversity" is to stop criticising or condemning others.

You are well aware of the story of the woman who was brought before Jesus for the crime of adultery. In those days the punishment was death by stoning. Jesus said to the crowd, "Only those who have not committed adultery even in their minds can throw the stones." None dared. Finally when the crowd dispersed and the woman and Jesus were alone, Jesus said, "Where are thine accusers?" She replied, "No man, Lord." Jesus then said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." (The Holy Bible, St. John 8, 3-11).

This then is the attitude of a religious man; no condemnation. A mystic of our time has said, "If instead of seeing faults in others, we look within ourselves, we are loving God." He further warns us, "Do not criticise; the habit of criticising our fellow human beings is a bad one. At the back of it often lies self-righteousness, conceit, a false sense of superiority; sometimes it indicates envy or desire for retaliation."

Let me tell you another story. I do not do so to entertain you or while away the time but because I believe through stories we can better grasp religious teachings.

There was a woman who had the unfortunate habit of condemning every one. Her Spiritual Master told her, "This is not good. It is possible what you say may be true but that is not the point. Your habit of condemnation is wrong and undesirable." So she agreed; "If you say so, I will not condemn anybody." The next day she returned and complained to the Master, "Another of your disciple is condemning; he is no good." Now the definition of what is good and bad has changed but the habit of condemnation continues.

Even if there is something which looks very wrong and our whole being feels like condemning, a religious mind would say:

"It appears to me that way, but who knows? It is my judgement that it is wrong but it may not be so because what is the value of my judgement. Even Christ left it between the woman and God."

The second thing we can do to improve quality of human relationship is not to hurt one another. Gone are the days when we used our fists to settle scores but on occasions we do use words which are hurtful and act in an unkind manner.

The essence of all religions - if you study them deeply - is not to hurt other people. If we cannot do good to any one, the least we can do is not to hurt any one.

Of course all these things that I have been saying can be summed within "Humata", "Hukhta", and "Hvarshta" meaning Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds, but from time to time we have to probe the question what are Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.

Earlier in the year, the Karachi Theosophical Society circulated a list of New Year Resolutions. As we are about to begin our Fasli

New Year on the 21st March, I am tempted to quote a few related to this morning's subject.

- I. I will accept all people as they are.
- II. I will say something nice to each person with whom I come into contact.
- III. I will speak only about cheerful and good things.
- IV. I will not get angry, excited or become indignant.
- V. I will not speak evil of others or criticise them.

To this list, I would like to add one more.

VI. I will not deliberately do or say anything that may harm a fellow human being or hurt his feelings.

May Ahura Mazda guide and help us to observe "Fraspayokhedram" or "**Unity in Diversity**" by observing these six resolutions each and every day of our lives. Amen!

Note: Vowels in Avestan words are pronounced as under:-

a as in 'alive'

a as in 'car'

e as in 'end'

o as in 'hole'

u as oo in 'boon'

“CHANGASHA”

The Pious Renowned Parsi who lived in Navsari five centuries ago.

This article on ‘Changasha’ is an English translation of the Gujarati article written by Late Shirin Shapurji Vajifdar of Bombay and published in the ‘Kaiser-e-Hind ’ issue dated 25th May 1958.

The translation into English has been done by Mr Cyrus P Mehta of U.K. This article will be of interest to our readers and has been reproduced with the permission of Mr Shapurji K Vajifdar, a life-member and a very keen and active supporter of WZO.

Nearly seven centuries after our forefathers arrived in India, the social, religious and pecuniary conditions of the community had deteriorated considerably.

In those days, the whole community lived in Navsari and the neighbouring towns. Those who lived in the small nearby villages earned their living by agriculture, running wine (toddy) shops or cutting wood from the forests and selling it.

Because of constant contact with the local Hindus and lack of any religious or communal guidance, those Parsis who lived in villages had completely forgotten the Zoroastrian traditional way of life. They started adopting Hindu customs and dresses. Parsi men called themselves “Navrang”, “Bhika”, “Fakir”, “Joga”, “Shikla”, “Kanji”, etc. and women “Jivi”, “Bhiki”, “Tansi”, etc. For dress, men wore red turbans and “dhoti” and shaved their heads leaving a little tuft of hair (“chotli”) on their heads. Women wore “ghagra” (petticoats), rings in their noses and wooden bangles, etc. They wore no shoes and went bare-footed and few bothered to wear sudreh-kusti.

"CHANGASHA"

There were no Agyaris or Atashbehrams they could visit and they worshipped Hindu idols. They carried the dead bodies on a wooden bier to Khambat and Ankleswar. In several towns and villages, there was no one to guide or help them. The net result was that the Zoroastrian religion and the way of life for which our forefathers left their homes and everything else in Iran, appeared to be at its nadir.

It was at this critical juncture that "Parvardegar" (God) sent a true noble Zoroastrian to rescue the community and our noble Zoroastrian faith. That person was the pious and great "Changasha" (Changa Asha). Like other great Parsis, he was born in Navsari at the beginning of the 15th century, some 500 years ago. His father's name was Ashaji Patel and he also happened to be the chief land-owner and administrator of Navsari. The child was named "Changa" and since his father's name was 'Asha', he came to be known as "Changasha".

After his father's death, Changasha became the administrator of Navsari and the surrounding villages and ruled over them under the authority of the Muslim Governor of Ahmedabad. Changasha proved himself to be an able administrator. In his times, there were few Parsis in Bombay because the majority lived in Navsari. Though himself a Behdin, Changasha was very knowledgeable about the Zoroastrian religion to which he was greatly devoted; he was also acknowledged as a religious preceptor.

As he was greatly distressed by the deplorable condition of poor Zoroastrians in the villages both under and outside his jurisdiction, he resolved to do something to improve their lot. His first step was to invite Parsis from Surat, Broach, Ankleshwar, Khambat, Songath and other places to Navsari. Thus, in the year 1460 A.D., a Parsi Religious and Social Welfare Conference was held for which purpose, a big camp was prepared near present Malesar Road in Navsari. The poor Parsees were given sudreh, kusti, clothing, shoes, 'sapat', etc.

Having satisfied their physical needs, Changasha organised several meetings at which sermons on several religious subjects were delivered so that the Parsis may have fuller knowledge of their religion and practise it with zeal in a proper manner. Thus the community which had deteriorated both materially and spiritually was rescued and saved by the noble effort of Changasha. For this reason, he was given the respectful title of 'Davar' and thereafter, he has been known as "Davar Changasha" in Parsi history. (Davar means a pious, righteous or a saintly person).

Contact with Iran

As there were several points on which these religious assemblies were unable to reach satisfactory conclusions, a mission was organised under the leadership of a brave Parsi whose name was Nariman Hoshang and he was sent to Iran in 1470 A.D. In those days, it was no easy matter to travel to Iran. This was the first time when Parsis from India tried to make contact with Zoroastrians of Iran and this finally came about solely through the efforts of the righteous Changasha.

Thereafter, several missions were sent to Iran in order to elucidate information from Zarthusti Dasturs. These exchanges of questions and answers are referred to as the 'Revayats' by the community. In the first three 'Revayats', the name of Changasha is respectfully remembered because of the part he played in reviving the noble Zoroastrian religion.

Iranshah burns brightly in Navsari for 325 years

During the time of Changasha, there was only one Atash Behram, namely, the one which housed the Holy Fire Iranshah. When the Hindu Kingdom of Sanjan was overpowered by the Muslims, the Zoroastrians living in Sanjan moved the fire to the mountains of Bahrot and later on, to the forests of Vansda, where they were prepared to protect it at the cost of their lives.

"CHANGASHA"

When Changasha came to learn about this desperate situation, he himself went to Vandsa and arranged to bring Iranshah to Navsari with due respect and formality. This way two birds were killed with one stone. A safe place was found for Iranshah and because of its presence, the Parsis who had practically forgotten their religion found a new awakening with enhanced faith in it.

Iranshah stayed in Navsari for 325 years and thereafter, was moved to Udwada. Changasha was a Behdin but, by his action, in bringing Iranshah to Navsari, he proved himself a worthy champion and protector of the Zoroastrian religion. It is difficult to imagine what would have been the state of community and the Zoroastrian religion, if this noble soul had not lived during this critical period in our history.

Colony of Ashapuri

Over and above rendering unforgettable services to his own community, Davar Changasha was no less zealous for the welfare of other sister communities like the Hindus and Muslims. He gave tax relief to the farmers belonging to those communities. He also established a separate colony for the Hindus in a beautiful and open part of Navsari. The colony was named 'Ashapuri' in memory of his father Asha. To this day, 'Ashapuri' is a well-known part of Navsari.

In 1498 A.D., Changasha paid to the Muslim King of Ahmedabad combined tribute on behalf of multi-communities living under his jurisdiction and thus rendered all the citizens a great service of shouldering their tax burden.

Parsi Colonies

Some lakes were reclaimed, beautiful areas were created and Parsis were housed in those areas which are still there today and known as 'Tarota', 'Kangawad', etc.

Anquetil du Perron

The above named French scholar and traveller arrived in Navsari in the 18th century. He soon found out that the name of Changasha was remembered and revered in every household. Later on, du Perron wrote that Davar Changasha used his wealth for the welfare of the poor, that his authority was benevolent and he spared no effort for the upliftment of religious and social welfare of his community.

Parsi-dominance in Navsari

It so happened that most of the officials working under Changasha were Parsis. The present day Parsi surnames such as 'Kotewal' (magistrate), 'Munshi' (secretary), 'Subedar' (officer), 'Havaldar' (chief of peons) arose out of Parsis holding such governmental positions, and Navsari also came to be known as 'Parsipuri'. Thus, for the first time, after coming from Iran to India the Parsis for all practical purposes, had a small kingdom of their own. However, it was lost when Mogul Emperor Akbar conquered it in 1573 during the 'reign' of Changaha's son, Minochersha.

Changasha had another son, Mangasha. (Corruption of Manecksha). About him, one writer said that he ruled Navsari as a king with much pomp and glory than his father. His 'court' consisted of about 1000 officials and wise persons. He had the authority to fine or punish the criminals. Truly, he was a worthy son of a worthy father.

Some historians are of the opinion that the suffix 'sha' after Parsi names such as Munchersha, Pirojsha, etc. is not a corruption of the word 'shah' (meaning king) but a proud imitation of the revered name of Changasha.

Tower of Silence

In 1531, Mangasha authorised the building of the first stone-built Tower of Silence in Navsari. Prior to it, Navsari's Tower of Silence was built of bricks. It was not built by a rich Parsi but by a

Changasha

poor Parsi Behdin lady by the name of Malabai Jithra who earned her living by spinning yarn. Because of this charitable deed, her name is remembered along with names of other prominent Parsis in community ceremonies.

Mangasha also established a poor house where mendicants were given free food daily. Taking advantage of the visit of Dastur Kaus Fariburz from Iran, Mangasha helped in the publication of 'Ardaviraf Nameh' so that the community could have a better understanding of the Zoroastrian precepts as well as Ardaviraf's description of heaven and hell.

Reverting to the life of Davar Changasha, the exact dates of his birth and death are not known but from the dates when different 'Revayats' were written, it is surmised that he died at an age between 75-80 years, probably about 1510 A.D.

This noble man left his footprints on the sands of time for the service he rendered to his own and other communities. The present day youth can well emulate his outstanding characteristics of devotion, of communal and religious welfare, charitable nature and nobility of mind. Even now after five centuries, Davar Changasha is remembered in our public religious ceremonies performed in Navsari as "Behdin Changa, Behdin Asha".

To this pious soul, a thousand salutations!

“Changasha”

Notes:-

1. *The above mentioned article is an English translation of a Gujarati article written by Ms Shirin Shapurji Vajifdar and published in “Kaiser-e Hind” of 25th May 1958*
2. *Reliable sources confirm that the names of the following persons are remembered along with some others in the public religious ceremonies performed in Navsari*
 - a. *Behdin Changa Behdin Asa.*
 - b. *Behdin Maneck Behdin Changa (son, known as Mangasha).*
 - c. *Behdin Faredoon Behdin Changa (son, not mentioned in the article).*
 - d. *Behdin Malan Behdin Behram (Ms Malanbai Jihra).*
3. *Navsari is no longer known as ‘Parsipuri`.*
4. *‘Malesar’ is not a road as mentioned in this article, but an area.*
5. *‘Ashapuri’ is now an area by itself and not just a colony for the Hindus.*
6. *Areas of ‘Tarota’ and ‘Kangawad’ as mentioned in the article, still exist and are known as such, but they form a part of a larger area known as ‘Motafalia’.*

(Source: “HAMAZOR”, the Bulletin of the World Zoroastrian Organisation, January – February, 1993.)

ZOROASTRIANISM THROUGH THE AGES

Cyrus P Mehta

Lecture given at the “World Congress of Faiths”, London
on Monday 17th May 1976

Guide Lines of the Lecture

1. THE ANCIENT PERIOD:-

Early Beliefs of Mankind, the Aryans,

Aryan concept — “from Nature to Nature’s God”, The Mazdayasni Religion, Prophet Zarathushtra and his mission, Life of Zarathushtra, Main features of his religion — Monotheism, Morality and Tolerance, Six Divine Attributes of God known as Ahura Mazda (Lord of Life and Wisdom), In due course of time the Attributes become Beings and are called Amesha-Spentas (Holy Immortals), each having a kingdom.

<u>Attribute</u>	<u>Cardinal Virtue</u>	<u>Presiding over</u>
Vohu-Mano	Good Mind	Animal Kingdom
Asha-Vahista	Righteousness	Fire
Kshatra-Vairya	Divine Power	Mineral Kingdom
Spenta-Armaiti	Holy Devotion	Mother Earth
Haurvatat	Perfection	Water
Ameretat	Immortality	World of Plants

Jashan Ceremony, in which Ahura Mazda and Amesha-Spentas are revered and invoked.

A glass of milk is used to represent animal kingdom,

Fire on the Urn represents Asha or Righteousness,

Utensils like urn and trays represent the Mineral Kingdom,

Ground on which the priests sit and pray represents the Mother Earth,

A glass of clear water represents Water,

Flowers and Fruits represent the World of Plants.

2. THE ACHEMENIAN PERIOD (558 B.C. – 330 B.C.)

Cyrus the Great (558 B.C. – 529 B.C.)

Darius the Great (521 B.C. – 485 B.C.)

Darius III (340 B.C.- 330 B.C.), the last of the Achaemenian dynasty was defeated by Alexander of Greece. The latter set fire to the Palace of Persepolis thus destroying Zoroastrian Scriptures.

3. THE GREEK PERIOD (330 B.C. – 247 B.C.)

Alexander of Greece (330 B.C. – 323 B.C.)

Antiochus II (264 B.C.- 247 B.C.) the last of the Greek Ruler was defeated by the Parthians.

During the period Zoroastrianism ceases to become the state religion. Priests keep it alive in the hearts of the Iranians.

4. THE PARTHIAN PERIOD

Arsaces I (248 B.C. – 211 B.C.)

Vologaeses I (51 A.D. – 77 A.D.) commenced the work of recompiling the lost Zoroastrian scriptures in a different language — not Avesta but Pahlavi.

Artabanus IV (209 A.D. - 224 A.D.) Last Ruler of the Parthian dynasty.

5. THE SASSANIAN PERIOD

Ardeshir Papekan (224 A.D. – 651 A.D.) reunites whole of Iran; Zoroastrianism once again becomes the state religion.

Shahpur II or Shahpur the Great (309 A.D.- 379 A.D.)

Khusroo I or Noshirwan the Just (531 A.D. – 579 A.D.)

Yazdegard III (632 A.D. – 651 A.D.) The Atabs conquer Iran, the end of Zoroastrian Empire.

6. THE ISLAMIC PERIOD (651 A.D. to present time)

Zoroastrianism disappears in Iran, Emigration of some Zoroastrians to India, Growth of Parsi Community in India, Present day position of Zoroastrians in Iran.

7. THE MODERN PERIOD

Study of Zoroastrianism by Western and Zoroastrian scholars, Gospel of Zarathushtra, subsequent development of Zoroastrianism, and the religion as understood by the present day followers.

8. ZOROASTRIAN BELIEFS (Valid for all times)

- (a) Ahura Mazda as supreme God Head.
 - (b) The Triad of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.
 - (c) The inexorable Law of Righteousness.
 - (d) The reward and the retribution in the Life hereafter.
 - (e) The Progress of the World towards Perfection.
 - (f) The ultimate triumph of the good over the evil through the coming of the Kingdom of Ahura Mazda with the co-operation of the man.
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ZOROASTRIANISM THROUGH THE AGES

Cyrus P Mehta

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on Monday 17th May 1976

In considering any religion there are a set of familiar questions which every one asks:-

- a) Who was its founder?
- b) Where and when did the Prophet reveal his faith?
- c) What was the state of society in those days?
- d) What was the background on which his creed rested?
- e) What influence did the religion exercise through the ages?
- f) And what part can it play in our modern times?

In dealing with Zoroastrianism there are two main factors which we must bear in mind. The first is that the background to the creed and the prophet's era occur in a period about which our knowledge is limited. The second is that much of Zoroastrian literature is now lost to the world. For these reasons one cannot be too certain about some aspects of Zoroastrianism.

However, scholars are unanimous in their opinion that thousands of years ago, the Aryans were the ancestors of the present day Parsis and Hindus of India and that these ancestors lived together in a region of which we have now no means of locating definitely. They lived together somewhere in Central Asia as one race, spoke the same language and shared a common culture. But at some stage due to ideological differences or climatic conditions one section migrated to India and the other to Iran.

So first let us consider the state of society in those days. Man then lived with nature. He was dependent on the elements of

Zoroastrianism through the ages

nature which provided him with shelter and food. It was therefore natural for him to turn to the sun, the moon, the stars, the fire and the water as objects worthy of worship. He further believed that they were presided over by invisible intelligences. But at the same time he noticed the malevolent agencies that appeared to challenge the authority and thwart the good work of the power of good. These bad agencies were earthquakes, storms, diseases and famines.

Man then started to compare his own good and evil qualities with natural powers and thought that virtue and vice were fostered by some good or evil agencies. Thus man came to acquire as many ministering angels to adore as devils to denounce.

But gradually this changed and the traditional Aryan concept, "from nature to nature's God" emerged. The idea behind this concept was the belief that there was a creator who was omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.

Long before the advent of Prophet Zarathushtra, the Iranian Aryans had Mazdayasni religion. This religion enjoined belief in and worship of Mazda or the all-wise Lord. At times, however, this fundamental principle of essentially monotheistic creed was lost sight of. People found it easy to revert to the nature-worship and propitiation of many gods. It was Zarathushtra's mission to reform the degenerated Mazdayasnian creed. He raised a vague nature worship into a definite and sublime theism. Whilst preaching a pure monotheism, he emphasised the moral side of human nature as no other person had done before him. In inspiring terms he presented the ideal of leading a good life for man. Though surrounded by evil, he taught that the ultimate controlling will in the universe was simply good. He maintained that the good will prevail if only man resisted evil. He appealed to all good men and women for their co-operation for furthering the purpose of God.

Zoroastrianism through the ages

Thus Zarathushtra developed the ideal of good life for the first time in the Aryan world. He cheered his followers with the message of hope as found in the immortal lines of Tennyson:-

“Oh! Yet we hope that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill.”

To fix the date or place of birth of Zarathushtra is very difficult. According to tradition he was born in Azerbaijan, west of Media. The date of birth is still a matter of surmise. The classical Greek writers like Aristotle, Plato, Pliny and others place the date as far back as 6,000 B.C. Some modern scholars place it between 1400 B.C. to 1000 B.C. Ancient Pahlavi and Arabic writers place the date somewhere in 7th Century B.C. The majority of the Zoroastrians strongly believe that the date mentioned by Greek writers is correct, e.g. 6,000 B.C. In the face of such conflicting dates and evidences it would be wise not to be too dogmatic about the birth date of the Prophet.

Tradition attaches various miracles to his life upon earth. It is said that Dughdova his mother even before her marriage had a glowing light surrounding her body. This was considered as an ill omen by the elders of her village and she was sent away from her home to stay in a distant land.

SLIDE 1:- Here we see Dughdova leaving her home.

In the new land she stayed at the house of one Paitaraspa and later married his son Pourushaspa. Tradition tells us that Zarathushtra smiled when he was born and did not cry as other infants do. In his infancy several attempts were made on his life by one Durasorb, an evil minded priest but each time miraculous intervention saved the child.

SLIDE 2:- Durasorb came to Zarathushtra's house to congratulate the parents and bless the child. When near the cot, he

Zoroastrianism through the ages

took out a dagger to kill the child but he was unable to do so as his arm became paralysed.

As Zarathushtra grew up he realised that superstition had displaced true knowledge and sorcery true faith. False gods had dethroned the true God and God's kingdom was overrun by the emissaries of evil.

At the age of fifteen he withdrew from the worldly life and spent several years in retreat. He longed for the day when he would see God or Ahura Mazda in his mind's eye and commune with his Father.

Wither he wandered and what he suffered neither history nor legend reveals completely. A day came when his desire was fulfilled and his mind became illumined. He had met and conversed with God. He was ready for his mission as a Prophet.

SLIDE 3:- Heavenly Light descends on Zarathushtra.

For ten long years he wandered from place to place but no one paid heed to him. Zarathushtra in his despondency pleads to Ahura Mazda.

“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.”

(Yasna 46.1)

“This I know, Mazda, wherefore I fail,
Few are my flocks and few my followers.
In grief I cry to Thee, Ahura, behold it.
Show me through Righteousness,
The Riches of the Good Mind.”

(Yasna 46.2)

Zoroastrianism through the ages

After ten years of strenuous work in preaching his gospel, Zarathushtra found his first convert — his cousin Mehdyomah. But he was far from being accepted as Prophet by the people of the land. Divine guidance then prompted him to travel eastwards to Bactria whose ruler was the king Vishtaspa later known as Gushtaspa.

The king was impressed by the Prophet's message and publicly embraced the new creed of Zarathushtra. The king's conversion was followed by that of the queen, the family and the courtiers. After that it was smooth sailing for the great teacher.

But, alas, the phase did not last long. The wicked chiefs and the priests succeeded by slander and deception in having the prophet imprisoned on a charge of sorcery. He was jailed but subsequently his innocence was proved and once again he became the established prophet of the land.

For the rest of his life he laboured hard preaching his religion and succeeded in establishing it in his own land and neighbouring countries.

SLIDE 5:- Death of Zarathushtra.

Scriptures record that he died a violent death at the age of 77 whilst offering prayers in his fire temple — an end worthy of the valiant defender and crusader in the cause of TRUTH.

Zarathushtra's teachings are mainly to be found in his own hymns called Gathas, which form the oldest part of the Avestan scriptures. When he spoke to his own people he persuaded them to give up the worship of 'daevas' or evil powers and to adore Ahura Mazda and give up idol worship.

Zoroastrianism through the ages

Tolerance is a striking feature of Zarathushtra's teachings. Earnestly he asked his disciples not to take any dogma or doctrine on trust but to accept or reject his teachings after examining all the pros and cons. Thus very early in the history of mankind he established a charter of spiritual liberty for all times.

No doubt he persuaded people to accept his creed as the best but there was no intolerance towards others so long as they did not teach polytheism. No where in his scriptures does one find any trace of fanatical opposition towards those who did not embrace his creed or any suggestion that the good and pious can be found only among the followers of Zarathushtrian faith.

Because of belief in monotheism and destroying evil so that good can succeed, gave every initiate the impetus to serve as a soldier of light, fighting for good against the forces of darkness and evil. Unfortunately in later times his followers lost sight of original teachings of the prophet and confounded his philosophy with his theology. This gave rise to the belief in the existence of an evil spirit, coequal with Ahura Mazda. Even though they made this mistake, they believed in the final downfall of Ahareman the evil spirit and as such their theology was not completely dualistic.

No race has passed through such singular vicissitudes of fortune as have the Parsis. None has been subjected to such tragic deprivation of its scriptural writings as this band of survivors of a once mighty race. No scripture has undergone such frightful distortions, mutations and mutilations as Avesta. How this came about is a subject by itself and can hardly be treated in today's lecture. Suffice to say that the mention of the personality of an evil spirit is nothing but a purely metaphorical statement of a profound truth concerning existence of evil.

Zoroastrianism through the ages

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra mentions six divine attributes in direct association with Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord. They fall into two well marked groups — the first three representing the Father-aspect and the remaining three the Mother-aspect of the Supreme. They are:-

Vohu Mano	-	The Good Mind
Asha Vahista	-	The Best Righteousness
Kshatra	-	The Strength of Lord or Divine Power
Spenta Armaiti	-	The Holy Devotion
Haurvatat	-	Perfection
Amertat	-	Immortality

In course of time these attributes came to be revered as beings next in rank to Ahura Mazda. They were designated as Amesha-Spentas or the Holy Immortals each presiding over a domain. Western scholars treat them as Archangels.

To Vohu Mano was assigned	-	the Animal Kingdom
To Asha Vahista was assigned	-	the Kingdom of Fire
To Kshatra Vairya was assigned-	-	the Kingdom of Minerals
To Armaiti was assigned	-	the Mother Earth
To Haurvatat was assigned	-	the Kingdom of Water
To Amertat was assigned	-	the Kingdom of Vegetation

In a ceremony known as 'Jashan' Ceremony, Ahura Mazda and Amesha Spentas are jointly invoked and thanked for all the blessings showered upon mankind.

We will now see a few slides of the ceremony.

In the first slide we see all the items used for the ceremony.

- (1) A glass of milk represents the animal kingdom of Vohu Mano (Good Mind)
- (2) Fire represents Asha-Vahista, (The Righteousness).
- (3) Urn and other metallic items represent the Mineral Kingdom of Kshatra Vairya, (The Strength of Lord).
- (4) Ground on which the priests sit represents Mother Earth of Armaiti or Holy Devotion.
- (5) A glass of water represents the Water Kingdom of Haurvatat (Perfection).
- (6) Flowers and fruits represent the Vegetable Kingdom of Amertat (Immortality).

SLIDE 7:- (Jashan 2 — Start of Ceremony)

In this slide we see that the priests have lit the holy fire. They recite 'Atash Niyash' — a prayer devoted to fire which has been called Son of Ahura Mazda. Fire is the symbol of Zoroastrian Faith. Whenever Zoroastrians pray before the fire they are following the most important injunction of their prophet and faith, viz. "Contemplate the Beams of Fire with a most pious mind." In that contemplation is a way of life and a Zoroastrian's effort to reach out to Ahura Mazda "whose body is Light and spirit Truth." Please note the little piece of cloth the priests have against their mouths. It is called 'padan' and the idea of wearing it is to prevent their breath defiling the fire.

SLIDE 8:- (Jashan 3 — Symbolism of Flowers)

Flowers play an important part in the performance of the ceremony. They are arranged in a set way, picked up one by one and exchanged between the priests in a set manner symbolising basic truths of the religion such as practice of Humata (Good Thoughts), Hukhta (Good Words) and Hvareshta (Good Deeds), to fight against evil at all times within and without and at the same time expressing joy for manifold gifts of creation.

During the ceremony priests join hands signifying bond between Man and Man, that is Brotherhood of Mankind and relationship between Man and Nature and through Nature to Nature's God. The fire burns upwards and it becomes a link making the priests one in spirit. The effect of ceremony on all who sit gazing at the picture is a sense of unity within. One feels surrounded with a divine tie, merging one's self with others and Ahura Mazda for the time being.

A mere abstract concept of the Supreme Being does not satisfy the yearnings of the human heart. The latter needs something to which it can attach itself. For this reason we have symbols, prayers, rituals and ceremonies. All forms of prayers and rituals offered with sincerity help in making spiritual progress. But at the same time one must reach out for essential guidance and teachings of the Prophets. In case of Zarathushtra, his message to humanity can be briefly summed up as follows.

1. Every human being must strive to understand the eternal law of Truth and Righteousness (ASHA) and must try to realise in his daily life.
2. In order to do this he must cultivate Love — Universal Love — (VOHU MANO) and realise it deep within Inner Self.
3. Truth and Love thus realised must be translated into Acts of Service (KSHTHRA).

Zoroastrianism through the ages

4. All through life one must hold fast to firm unshaken Faith (ARMAITI) and goodness of all creation.
5. Thus one attains Perfection (HAURVATAT) and Immortality (AMERTAT) and becomes perfect as Our Father in Heaven is Perfect and conquers death or in other words achieves Immortality.

Let us now leave the era of the Prophet and move forward from the ancient to historical times. What the gap is between the two in terms of years we are not sure. Iran's historical period commences with the founding of the Acheminian dynasty by Cyrus the Great in 558 B.C. A few scholars have expressed doubts as to whether Cyrus was a Zoroastrian king. However there are good reasons to believe that in the days of Darius the Great (521 B.C. – 485 B.C.) the faith of Zarathushtra had become the state religion of Iran.

Tradition has it that Darius caused all the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism to be collected after he was firmly established on the throne. He had them inscribed on parchment in letters of gold. The whole collection was divided according to the subject matter into 21 books called NASKS. The collection was deposited at the Imperial Library at Persipolis.

Cyrus and Darius were among the greatest rulers of the ancient world but they were humble and noble persons. In his great inscription on Behistan Rocks, Darius says,

“What I have done, that I did all by the grace of Ahura Mazda.
O Man! This is Ahuramazda's command to thee;
Think not evil; abandon not the right path; sin not!”

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The later Achaemenian inscriptions show a markedly different spirit. The pure ethical worship of Ahuramazda recedes into background and though His name is mentioned, others like MITHRA and ANAHITA are also invoked side by side with HIM. The true spirit of the Zoroastrian Faith had weakened and the Imperial family was torn to pieces by mutual jealousies and internal factions. So when Alexander of Greece invaded Persia in 330 B.C. the whole Achaemenian power collapsed. Not only did Alexander destroy the power but whilst in a drunken state gave orders to set fire to the palace at Persipolis, thereby destroying the most holy and entire scriptures of Zoroastrianism.

Let us now see some slides relating to this period. A few years ago Iran celebrated the 2500th Anniversary of Cyrus the Great on a grand scale. I have taken the liberty of combining the scenes of the festivities together with those of the ancient remains of the Achaemenian period.

SLIDES 9 to 17:- Celebration of the Festivities.

SLIDE 18:- Ruins of Persepolis, a panoramic view.

SLIDE 19:- Steps and Entrance to the Palace.

SLIDE 20:- Groups of Soldiers on the walls of Persepolis.

SLIDE 21:- Persian actors dressed up as Achaemenians.

SLIDE 22:- Figure of Fravashi on an ancient monument.

SLIDE 23:- King with attendant and the figure of Fravashi. Overhead.

On this relief from an archway at Persepolis, the winged symbol of Fravashi hovers above the King of Kings. The King, the earthly representative of God towered over other men in his regal glory.

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SLIDE 24:- Tomb of Cyrus the Great.

The tomb is at Pasagardae. It is made of blocks of fine white limestone and has the appearance of marble. The funerary chamber is thirty-six feet high and the lower step is the height of a man.

SLIDE 25,26 &27:-Tomb of Darius the Great at Naqsh-I-Rustam.

The front of the tomb is in the shape of a cross but one cannot be sure of its significance.

SLIDE 28:- The Kaba of Zarathushtra.

It faces the royal tombs at Naqush-I-Rustam and stands thirty feet high. Many believe that it was ancient place of worship but there is little evidence to support this belief.

SLIDE 29:- Ruins of Persepolis in the sunset.

This is very characteristic. Just as the sun rises and sets, so do the mighty empires spring up and die. In the words of the great Indian Poet Rabindranath Tagore, "None lives for ever and nothing lasts for long."

The Greek interlude lasted from 330 B.C. to 247 B.C. and we have no record of Zoroastrianism for about 200 years. Doubtless, the learned priests who had survived the invasion, kept the faith alive in the hearts of the people and very likely, they had also preserved in their memory, the greater part of the scriptures that had been destroyed.

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The religion was by no means dead because the new rulers of Iran, the successors of Alexander were tolerant in religious matters. But the religion had ceased to become the state religion for the time being. May be it was the very obscurity into which it had receded that caused it to be revived with renewed vigour when the hour came.

The Greek rule came to an end when the Parthians defeated the Greeks and founded their dynasty in 248 B.C. The earlier Parthian kings were neither Zoroastrians or Aryans. But because the founder of the dynasty (Arsaces I) was helped by Zoroastrians of Bactria, the religion once again increased its influence and regained its lost position in Iran. The later Parthian rulers were definitely Zoroastrians and did much to bring together the scattered remnants of the older scriptures. The work of recompiling the Avesta texts was begun by the Parthian king Valkhas (Vologases I) who ruled from 51 A.D. to 77 A.D. But the completion of the work took 300 years under a new dynasty.

The new dynasty (Sassanian) was Aryan, Parsi and Zoroastrian. Its founder was Ardehir Papekan who defeated the last Parthian ruler (Artabanus IV) in 226 A.D. He once again united the whole Iran and restored the lost glories of Achamenian kings.

SLIDE 30:- Ardeshir Papekan.

In the slide we see a rock relief from Naqsh-I-Rustam. On the right hand side we see Ohrmazd (God) offering the diadem and gift of kingship to Ardeshir Papekan. So once again we see here the idea that a king is a divinely appointed person.

SLIDE 31:- In this relief we see two smaller Sassanian reliefs under the tomb of Darius the Great.

Ardeshir Papekan was an ardent devotee of Zarathushtra and carried forward the work already begun by the later Parthian monarchs. He

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and his son Shahpur I were greatly helped by great and learned men. Among the latter were two Dasturs (High Priests) Adarbad Maraspand and Arda Viraf. Both these holy priests had a great share in restoration of the ancient faith in Iran and in translating the scriptures into the language of the people — Pahlavi. Both were also the authors of important theological works. But the actual work was not completed till the reign of Shahpur II (309 A.D. — 379 A.D.). As said earlier the compilation of scriptural texts took nearly 300 years in a different language — not Avesta but Pahlavi.

The Sassanian dynasty lasted some 423 years, that is from 226 A.D. to 651 A.D. Many important events took place during the period. The Zoroastrian empire extended beyond the boundaries of Persia both in the West and the East. Zoroastrianism became the state religion of Iran. The early Sassanians though zealous about their ancient faith of Zarathushtra were at the same time tolerant towards other faiths but due to various factors including political and religious, this spirit of tolerance did not continue.

In the reign of Shahpur I, a remarkable man called Mani appeared upon the religious horizon of Iran. Christianity had already been established in Iran and the Assyrian Church was a considerable power in the land second only to Zoroastrian church.

Mani held very advanced views about the organisation of the state and the society and they were indeed democratic for the age in which he lived. As such they were not acceptable to the aristocratic Aryan polity of his age. His uncompromising asceticism revolted the Zoroastrian priesthood. Because his character was pure, he was allowed to carry on his propaganda for some time. But finally he was beheaded by the grandson of Shahpur I, known as Behram I.

Soon afterwards the Roman Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the state religion. Consequently the Persian Christians began to regard the Emperor of Byzantine as their spiritual head. Rome had always been a formidable rival of Persia and each always ready to stir up trouble for the other. Thus Persian

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Christians owing spiritual allegiance to Byzantium became political suspects and the suspicion was certainly justified by actual events. Shahpur II — better known as Shahpur the Great — took up the view that the Christians were disloyal to Persia and the House of Sassan. So from that time the Christians were subjected to many disabilities and they suffered heavily from time to time.

SLIDE 32&33:-Here we see Roman Emperor Valarian surrendering To Shahpur the Great (309 A.D. – 379 A.D.)

Another sect arose about 487 A.D. and rapidly spread over Persia and Armenia. This was founded by Mazdak. On the spiritual side Mazdak taught devotion and the sacredness of animal life. But on the social side his ideas were so advanced that even modern day communists may find them hard to accept. He maintained perfect equality for all men not merely at birth but throughout life. So he taught that all property as well wives should be held in common. The extreme speed with which these revolutionary doctrines spread would indicate that there was something fundamentally wrong at the very heart of the Sassanian polity. Revolutionary doctrines do not and cannot spread where the aristocracy, the natural leaders of the people remember their motto — *noblesse oblige* — and fulfil their duty towards those from whom they expect obedience and submission. Ultimately the Mazdaks were put down with relentless cruelty and there were wholesale massacres of those people which began with 523 A.D. Thus Mazdakism lived for mere 40 years.

I have talked about Manichism and Mazdakism since many think that ideas about democracy and communism belong to the modern world. These ideas were propagated nearly 1500 years ago but had no chance of acceptance because they did not belong to the period. The era then was of the kings and churches who believed they were divinely appointed to rule over their subjects.

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Zoroastrianism through the ages

Persia, both in the West and the East. Zoroastrianism once again became the state religion of Iran.

The last great Sassanian king was Khusroo I, better known as Noshirwan or Anoshirwan the Just. He ruled between 531 A.D. and 576 A.D. It was in his time that Mohmad, the great Prophet of Arabia was born — 570 A.D. Indeed the Prophet is reported to have referred with pride, the fact that he was born in the days of the great Persian monarch. Nothing seemed more improbable then, that this mighty Sassanian empire would crumble away within 75 years after passing away of the greatest of the Sassanians.

It was obvious that the decay had set in the Iranian society. Spirituality of the Zoroastrian faith was reduced to formal rituals and penances. Added to the spiritual dissatisfaction was the political rivalry among the aristocracy and intrigues in the royal household. So at the very first shock of fresh and vigorous Islam the power of Iran simply melted away and the Zoroastrian empire came to an end in 651 A.D.

It is difficult to say how far Islam was forced on the conquered nation and how far the new faith was readily accepted by the Persians. There was no sudden persecution but gradually it increased. A few who left for India were given shelter by a Hindu king by the name of Jadav Rana. Out of these few has grown up the present day community of Parsees. The history of Parsees is a subject by itself and we cannot consider it today. Those Zoroastrians who stayed behind, bore the full brunt of a persecuted community for nearly 900 years. It was during this period that the remnants of Zoroastrian scriptures were smuggled out to India and there they stayed for centuries. But the greater part of the ancient scriptures have perished utterly. The things that remain are those parts of Avesta which were used for daily worship or for the frequent ceremonies and hence were remembered by the priests. So you will appreciate how tragically the Zoroastrians have been deprived of their spiritual scriptures.

Once the Parsee community became a leading and important community of India it succeeded in helping its Zoroastrian brothers in Iran. Fortunately for the Zoroastrian in Iran, the present Shah of Iran and his late father have been benevolent rulers and Irani Zoroastrians — about 20,000 — enjoy all the benefits in common with the Muslims and other minority communities of Iran.

THE MODERN PERIOD

In the last 225 years, great interest has been shown by the western scholars in Oriental studies including Zoroastrianism. Between them and our Zoroastrian scholars we are now better equipped to learn and understand the message of Prophet Zarathushtra and the subsequent development of his religion.

We are most fortunate that the Gathas — the Songs the Prophet himself composed and which contain his Gospel — are available to us. Day in and day out we can recite the very words he uttered in Avesta. So long as Gathas remain we have the means of spiritual regeneration in every age. I will therefore now briefly dwell on Zarathushtra's Gospel and the subsequent development of Zoroastrianism and why it took place and what the present day Zoroastrianism means to the followers of the faith.

That person who has acquired Vohu Mano, the Good Mind, his thoughts will be the most God-like, namely the truest, the highest, the most noble, the most complete, the most peaceful and he will be the best healer because his thoughts will reflect a greater degree of perfection.

As man thinks so he becomes. The problem of evil is simply a misuse of the law of freedom to choose. Evil will disappear when we no longer indulge in it. Man is potentially perfect but free will can cause him to appear or become imperfect.

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Zarathushtra's gospel insists on character and character alone. For without Righteousness (ASHA) all other virtues turn into vice. The path of ASHA means the straight path, the path that is same for all, the law that does not bend to suit the convenience of a particular individual, the path that conforms to the standard. It is the path of virtue, the path of "Categorical Imperative" which applies to all men irrespective of their choice.

God has ordained that we serve human folks for the sake of their advancement. His KSHTHRA means selfless service to humanity and His divine power can always be invoked to serve that purpose.

SPENTA ARMAITI is the Divine Wisdom which helps us in distinguishing between right and wrong and enables us to choose the right path with courage and good thoughts. It is also the Holy Devotion which fills our hearts with love for our Creator.

When a person has imbibed all the four faculties of Good Mind, Righteousness, Moral Courage and Holy Devotion, he is well equipped to realize God. He has thus acquired HAURVATAT (Perfection) and AMERTAT (Immortality).

In the Gathas we also find the philosophy of "twin mentalities" which reveals itself in thought word and deed as the better and bad. The struggle of the twain is the struggle of the man himself to make his mind VAHISTEM MANO — the best mind, i.e. Universal Mind or God's Mind. Zarathushtra's teachings thus seek to fortify the good part of the minds of his followers. It is not difficult to see that this simple yet profound faith was totally devoid of pomp, pageantry or rituals. After the passing away of the Prophet his successors found it impossible to keep it in its original form. The reasons were:-

1. The successors of the king Vishtasp were weak and the eastern Iran had lost its political importance.

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2. The excellence of his highly ethical religion was understood by the cultured class but the masses could not comprehend it. The latter, specially in western Iran found it easy to invoke Mithra and his heavenly associates with elaborate rituals and sacrifices.
3. The leaders of the Zoroastrian church were alarmed at the growing tendency of the followers to go back to pre-Zoroastrian faith of the Indo-Iranian cult. They felt that if Zarathushtra's religion was to survive, some accommodation would have to be made by bringing in ritualism acceptable to people. They sought for a compromise and found it.

The six divine attributes — about which I have just spoken — together with Ahura Mazda were given a class designation of Amesha Spentas or the Holy Immortals. These Amesha Spentas were given the first rank in the divine hierarchy. Former Indo-Iranian deities were brought in as 'Yazatas' or the adorable ones but this time as the deities giving their allegiance to Ahura Mazda and working under Him.

The two parts of one mind or "Mainyu" became separated and were termed "Spenta Mainyu" the Benevolent Spirit and the "Angra Mainyu", the Evil Spirit. The two spirits came to be depicted as constantly at war with each other, thus introducing the element of Dualism in the religion.

Zarathushtra spoke of one God, one Creator. No where in his Gospel do we find any mention of small gods, archangels or angels or spirits benevolent or otherwise or theological dualism.

We can therefore liken Zarathushtra's gospel to any other gospel where God is Supreme Father and He alone is to be worshipped. The subsequent Zoroastrianism could be likened to traditional Hinduism where along with the Supreme Reality there are other deities which are invoked and worshipped.

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The scholars may argue whether it is possible to have two apparently different approaches in one single religion. However it is important to note that in the later-day Zoroastrianism the supreme position of Ahura Mazda is always maintained. The prayers devoted to Amesha Spentas and Yazatas are not construed as praying to lesser Gods or deities but are accepted more in the original Aryan spirit or concept — “from Nature to Nature’s God”. Further in the said prayers Ahura Mazda is always invoked first and thereafter Amesha Spentas or Yazatas.

The belief in securing blessings from the divine spirits does not find favour with some people. They argue that noble deeds of virtue alone find favour with God. Others whilst accepting this as true, point out that if the world were full of people practising deeds of virtue, there would be no need for any religion with its doctrines or rituals. They further maintain that prayers and rituals do no harm and look upon it for spiritual development enabling them to follow the righteous path.

Belief in the multiplicity of divine spirits according to some, run counter to the generally accepted notion of omnipotence of God who is called in the Gathas “the unprecedented Ahura Mazda”. Others maintain that if there is life after death and there is a spiritual world, then the existence of divine spirits working under Ahura Mazda is plausible. They argue that the entire question should be construed in the real sense of diversification of the omniscience and omnipotence of God who may be compared to a huge fire and the divine spirits as innumerable sparks of the one and the same fire.

Whatever scriptures are in existence, are preserved intact without trying to modify or change them. It is left to the individual Zoroastrian to follow whatever appeals to him or her. This way the Parsees have avoided establishing different churches or sects. By and large they pray their ancient prayers composed in Avesta and Pazand. Sometimes the prayers are supplemented with Gujarati prayer songs or English prayers based on ancient texts. Now and then the voice of reformation is raised but this is mostly in the

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matter of socio-religious practices of the community and not for rewriting of the ancient scriptures.

Scholars and theologians may argue as to what is best in the ancient scriptures and what exactly the texts mean. But the follower of the faith is primarily concerned with the spiritual sustenance he can find from his religion and the guidance he can obtain for living his daily life. And this he does in spite of the severe loss and the subsequent distortion of his scriptures.

In conclusion I would like to point out the contribution made by Zoroastrianism to humanity through the ages.

1. In the course of thousands of years, Zoroastrian religion has given spiritual sustenance not only to millions of its followers but also to people of other faiths.
2. Zarathushtra's holy triad of HUMATA (Good Thoughts), HUKHTA (Good Words) and HVARESHTA (Good Deeds) has kindled religious zeal and illumined the minds and warmed the hearts of the countless number of his followers.
3. Zarathushtra the chosen of Ahura Mazda does not belong to any single period or particular people but to all ages and all people. In its long history, Zoroastrianism has influenced Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
4. With sublime confidence Zarathushtra has foretold that his religion will live and his followers will do battle with the forces of evil to the end of the world. His noble faith has weathered the heaviest storms and survived them. A religion which withstood these trials in the past, will stand any trial in the future.

5. Zoroastrianism will live by its eternal verities of the belief.
 - a) In the personality of Ahura Mazda.
 - b) An abiding faith in the Triad of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.
 - c) The inescapable Law of Righteousness.
 - d) The reward and retribution in the life hereafter.
 - e) The progress of the world towards perfection.
 - f) And the ultimate triumph of the good over evil through the coming of the Kingdom of Ahura Mazda with the co-operation of man.

6. These are the truest and the greatest realities of life. They are valid for all times. They constitute the lasting elements of Zoroastrianism. In the midst of accretions that have gathered round it during the long period of its life, these immortal truths have remained substantially unchanged and by them Zoroastrians will live for all times.

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ZARATHUSHTRA, A LIVING ENTITY

*(Zoroastrian House, London, Religious
Instruction Class Talk - Lesson 2 – 15 May 1966)*

Purpose of Talks: 1. To stimulate thinking and interest in religious subjects.

2. To enable parents to help their children in understanding Zarathushtrian Faith.

Introduction:- According to Shenshai Calendar, on Monday 6th June, it will be Daye Mah and Khordad Roj. We call this day Zarthostno Diso or in other words death anniversary of our Prophet Zarathushtra. In all Fire Temples, Remembrance Jashan Ceremonies will be performed and many of our co-religionists will also go to Atash Behrams or Agyaris to offer their prayers. We ourselves will also hold the Remembrance Jashan at Zoroastrian House on Sunday, 5th June. Arising out of this coming event a few thoughts have occurred to me which I now place before you.

1. Many of you present here must have attended at some time our Zoroastrian funerals at Brookwood. At the end of every funeral, our worthy President, Mr. J. D. Moos expresses a few words of sympathy and condolence to the relatives of the deceased. And he always says, “There is no such thing as death in our religion. Death is merely passing on from one life to another.”

2. Most natural question then we must ask is “What about Zarathushtra, our own prophet, whose followers we are? Did he just live, propagate his religion and passed away? Is God just content for his prophets to be born from time to time and is that the end of it all?”

Please bear with me, when I say these are not idle questions for the sake of intellectual gymnastics. If we can believe that our souls live on after death, then the same is very true of Zarathushtra.

Mind you, in our religion there is a distinction between Soul and Fravashi of each person and I am using the term soul in its generally accepted sense.

3. Scholars of Avesta and Zoroastrian literature can argue as to the dates of birth and death of Zarathushtra. But to us who follow his faith, the most important point to remember and cherish is that Zarathushtra not only lived many hundreds of years ago but he has been in spirit with his people all these years and will always be, so long as they pray to him, so long as they talk to him, as long as they seek his guidance in all matters. In short to regard him as a living entity.

4. This age is of Science and our minds have been trained not to accept anything without proper and scientific investigation. I do not think we can apply such a precept in the field of religion and esoteric matters. However, the modern attitude of mind has created several doubts in the minds of younger persons. They ask, "Is there a God? Why should I believe in Him when I cannot see Him or feel His presence? If he is so powerful, why is there so much evil in this world? If he is merciful, why is there so much suffering in this world? Why do some die in prime of their youth whereas others live to a ripe age practically bed-ridden?"

5. These questions and doubts are legitimate and worth pursuing and we shall discuss them in future. What I wish to point out today is that in spite of these doubts and misgivings, there is no real reason to become an atheist and take no interest in religion. If belief in God is difficult, then we can all try the first step of belief in Zarathushtra and his teachings. No one who studies them can fail to be influenced by his profound teachings. And through Zarathushtra to God would be a mere matter of time and would not be difficult.

6. In conclusion,

(a) Let us not think of Zarathushtra who lived in some distant past. He is with us and will always watch over us provided we follow the path laid down by him.

(b) Let us not forget his message. He has said that:- In this life we must choose between good and evil. It is not enough to be good but also to perform good deeds. There is only one path and that path is of Righteousness. These are his laws and commandments. We cannot break them with impunity and still lull ourselves into believing that everything will be all right. “As you sow, so shall you reap.”

(c) Over 1300 years ago we lost a mighty empire because our rulers and ancestors strayed from the path laid down by Zarathushtra. But later, when for the sake of their religion they went through all the trials and tribulations, Zarathushtra helped them to come through.

Let me briefly relate here the last years of our empire. The last dynasty of Zoroastrian kings was the Sassanian dynasty, founded by Ardeshir Papakan in 226 A.D. It produced many notable kings including Shahpur the Great, and Noshervan the Just. Khusroo Purvis was the last great king of this dynasty. Soon after he died in 628 A.D. the rot began. In four years that followed there were four rulers — Kobad II, Ardeshir III, Queen Puranmidokht and Queen Azarmidokht. The last of the Sassanian King, Yazdegard III, inherited a legacy of intrigues, rivalries and corruption within the Royal Family, Courtiers and Army Chiefs. True spirit of religion was abandoned in favour of elaborate ceremonies and rituals enforced by the clergy. This was the position of Iran when the Arab invaded it and found it easy to conquer it.

Zarathushtra, a Living Entity

(d) We should therefore learn from our history. We can ill -afford luxuries of futile strifes and foolish controversies. In religious matters there is a very wise epigram in Gujarati and it is worth remembering. It says:-

* ***“Dharmanā dahyāo to ghanā hoy, pan dhayāono dharma to ekaj hoy.”***

As long as we keep the welfare of our religion and the community foremost in our minds and tread the path laid down by Zarathushtra, we will not have lived our lives in vain. The rest is up to Dadar Ahura Mazda.

Cyrus P Mehta, London, 15th May 1966.

* Epigram freely translated into English:-

“Wiseacres of religion are many, but those who are wise have only one religion.”

Key to pronunciation of vowels in Gujarati epigram quoted above:-

a...alive

a...car

e...extra

o...hole

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