

## Zoroastrianism: Its Stewardship for all Creation, the Animate and the Inanimate.

(Text of presentation by Pervin J. Mistry at the Parliament of Worlds Religions, Melbourne, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009.)

We are the oldest monotheistic religion.

Asho Zarathushtra is our Holy Prophet.

Our Revealed Book is the Holy “Avesta”.

The Holy Avesta reveals the concept of a Universal Brotherhood known as “Arda-Fravash”. “Fravashi” is the spark of the Divine without which nothing exists in the spiritual or the corporeal worlds. It follows that the Brotherhood of Arda-Fravash includes all the kingdoms of nature which also include those considered to be inanimate or lifeless.

We are taught that the universe is a living organism providing environment for countless hosts of entities even though the types of physical bodies and the level of consciousness may differ. Whatever exists in the universe, from atoms to the stars, has its origin in the One Almighty Creator.

A picture is worth more than a thousand words; so, let us see how the animate and the inanimate creations are inseparably interconnected.

**I)** As taught in the litany to the Fravashis (Farvardin Yasht, k. 14), **figure 1** shows that in the very beginning, there was no light, no movement \_ all was still and dark, that is, the universe was in a state of “afratat-kushish”. The circle represents boundless time or infinity, “zurvan-e akarne”.

**II)** The dot in the centre as shown in **figure 2** represents Ahura Mazda’s First Thought (Light) which produced the “Bang”, or Sound / Resonance of the Divine Word “Ahunavar”, resulting in the manifestation of the universe.



Figure 1

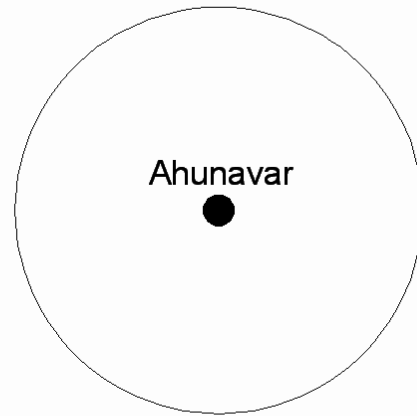


Figure 2

**III)** As shown in **figure 3**, the Avestan Commentary on the Word “Ahunavar” (Yasna 19), reveals that Ahura Mazda’s plan for the creation of the universe discloses 3 integrated stages: the creation of the spiritual, the meta-physical and the physical worlds

**IV)** Additionally, as shown in **figure 4**, the Divine Plan simultaneously discloses a 3-fold strategy whereby: 1) the souls first separate from Ahura Mazda and descend to the meta-physical world; 2) consequently, the souls begin their long pilgrimage through the various kingdoms of nature from the meta-physical world to the physical world and 3) thirdly, after perfecting their spiritual qualities, the souls re-unite with Ahura Mazda once again in the spiritual world at the Divinely Appointed Hour called “Frashogard”, or Renovation.



Figure 3

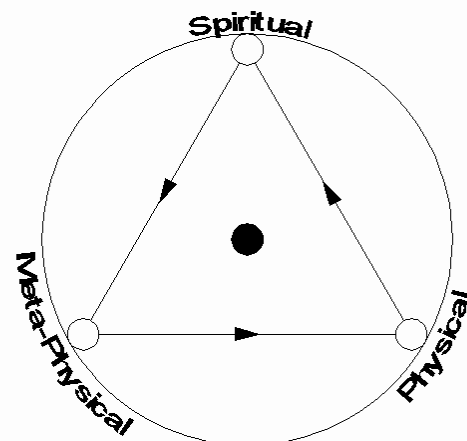


Figure 4

**V)** **Figure 5** indicates that in order to establish law and order within these 3 worlds, Ahura Mazda creates and appoints 6 other Ameshaspands or Archangels in charge of one of the seven specific creations. These creations are: fire, water, earth, minerals,

vegetation, animals and mankind. The names of the Ameshaspands are written in blue, under each specific creation.

VI) Figure 6 verifies that Ahura Mazda Himself, at the centre, is the creator and head of all the 7 creations which are inter-connected and unified, proving the Oneness of Life!

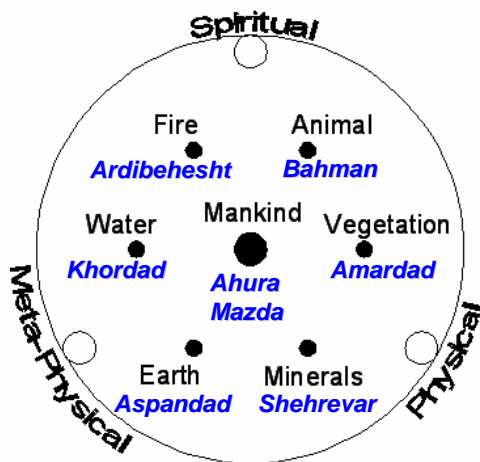


Figure 5

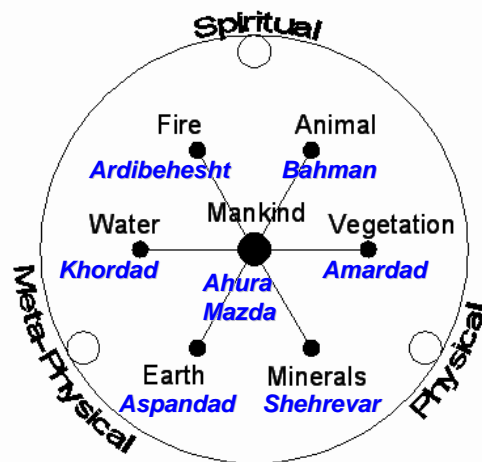


Figure 6

As demonstrated, it is the **unity** of all souls which sustains Life. By destroying a single creation, we damage the Wheel of Life! Nature is holistic and cannot survive or be destroyed in parts. The Holy Avesta refers to nature as “Asha”, meaning nature is sacred and divine. The so-called inanimate creations such as fire, water, air, earth are the very building blocks of the sacred universe whose offspring mankind is! These creations exist within us, sustaining “life”! As a result, if a single one of Nature’s creations is damaged, all other creations are similarly affected and we jeopardize our own existence.

The Holy Avesta teaches that fire, water, air and earth are not lifeless or inanimate creations. Every atom, every mountain, river and tree enshrines within itself, a Living, Conscious Divinity. For example, water is worshipped as Avan Yazad, a Divine Being and not as a lifeless creation. Life cannot sustain without water. Our un-conservative life style causes the glaciers and the Polar ice caps to melt \_ influencing the salinity of the oceans. This in turn endangers our survival by adversely harming the precise balance of the whole ecosystem.

In the Holy Avesta, even the “air” is not inanimate. “Air” is a divinity worshipped as Mino Ram. Without Ram Yazad, the resonance of the Divine Word could not have resulted in the manifestation of the universe! Ram Yazad is the purifier of all things between the earth and the sky and is victorious over all the evil forces, meaning pollution. Polluted air means polluted lungs.

Trees and forests are the lungs of the Earth. As a result, no prayers end without paying homage to the trees, “urvaire”. The plant “Hom” is the Tree of Life and Immortality. “Hom” is also a Yazad, a Divine Being. Destruction of plants / forests also means

destruction of the fragile ecosystem on which our survival depends. If a single spoke in the Wheel of Life is damaged, one by one, other unified creations also get equally destroyed.

To us, minerals are also sacred and in the charge of Shehrevan Ameshaspand. By depleting the natural resources, we deplete our own good health because just as we need a balance of iron, sulphur and other minerals in our blood, the earth also needs its minerals to sustain a healthy ecology!

The Sky is believed to be a storehouse of spiritual energy and protection. It too, is held as sacred because it includes the Sun, Moon and the Stars which are identified as “Yazads” or Spiritual Beings. The Sun, to us, is a Living Divinity whose form is Khorshed Yazad and its radiance is Meher Yazad or Mithra. Similarly, the Moon is Mah Yazad. The Milky Way is Dravasp Yazad (Gosh Yasht). The Holy Avesta reveals that the seeds of water, earth and plants are contained in the Stars (Siroza Yasht, k. 13). The origin of all the so-called inanimate creations is spiritual!

We worship fire as Ahura Mazda’s Son, a Divine Being. The litany to the sacred fire (Atash Niyayesh) reveals that fire grants intelligence and fluency of tongue! Lifeless or inanimate objects cannot bestow blessings! Only life, in whatever form, has intelligence. Esoterically, fire symbolizes the “light of the mind”, or intelligence, and “fluency of tongue” refers to speech, or “sound”, an inevitable consequence of “thought” or “intelligence”! To us, fire, as Ahura Mazda’s Son, represents His Divine Light, Radiance and Energy, possessing Intelligence. Therefore, we revere and worship fire as a divinity and not as an inanimate creation.

The sacred fires we worship are elaborately consecrated 1,128 times and then enthroned on fire-altars. These are kept perpetually burning for thousands of years.

We regard Mother Earth as a sacred living entity with a soul, worthy of worship. We venerate the Earth as the Archangel Aspandad.

Just as we have bones, liquids, heat, organs, etc. Mother Earth also has fires, water, air, minerals and **mountains**. Mountains are the Earth’s spiritual centres of energy. They contain Divine Light. Wisdom dwells on mountain tops where all the prophets and sages have gone to acquire communion with the Divine. Several sacred mountains are mentioned in the Zamyad Yasht. According to the Holy Avesta, all creation is animate \_ Nature being a Living, Holistic Entity!

Ahura Mazda has placed mankind in charge of all the other creations because we are given the intelligence to think, speak and act according to the free will! We are free to choose our thoughts, words and actions in life. Inevitably, our moral choices and actions reflect immutable consequences upon ourselves, as reward or punishment.

As a result, our religion pays great emphasis to the “mind”. The dual mentalities, i.e. good and evil, exist in the mind. Significantly, “evil” being incorporeal, cannot be destroyed by any physical means such as weapons. Only a spiritually illumined mind is able to resist evil thoughts, words and deeds which lead to greed and self-destruction. Through thoughtless destruction of the animate **and** the inanimate creations, we have caused severe climatic changes. Weather is ringing warning bells but sadly, we are not concerned. If mankind will look upon Mother Nature as a nourisher of Life, as a sacred entity, its destruction through pollution and greed will be replaced by reverence and preservation.

Even at death, Zarathushtis are enjoined not to pollute the sacred elements of nature (Vendidad). We do not pollute the earth through burial; we do not pollute the fire or air through cremation and we also do not pollute water. Our system of solar exposure, using the intense rays of the Sun to decontaminate and dispose a corpse, is expeditious and eco-friendly.

Some of you may not be familiar with our Religion. It originated in ancient Persia (today’s Iran), many millennia ago. Zarathushtis have always lived in harmony with Nature. They invented “Green” technology countless centuries ago which still works effectively. They built “budgirs” or tall wind chimneys to circulate air and keep their homes cool. With “budgirs”, and thick mud walls as insulation against heat as well as cold, no air conditioners or heaters are needed! They draw cold water from the underground streams so that even in the desert, water is always cool and pure. And, no refrigerators are needed. The world can progress spiritually by going backwards in time in order to learn from the ancients how they used natural resources, such as wind and solar power, to live in harmony with nature.

In conclusion, I say that our religious mandate is to attain the fundamental unity of all souls which forms the **Universal** Brotherhood of Arda-Fravash.

Every atom that exists is considered sacred and holy as existing in the Divine. Please, we do not need soldiers to kill other humans in the name of religion or greed for power; we do not need ammunition to destroy our environment! During the stone ages, we fought with stones, bows and arrows; today we fight with chemical and nuclear weapons! We have not progressed spiritually. We are destroying what we have not created! We need peace, protection and preservation for all the creations willed by Ahura Mazda!

Our stewardship for the animate as well as the so-called “inanimate” creations is religiously mandatory.

Thank you!