

Human Life : A Blessing, A Duty and a Struggle.

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Zoroastrianism teaches us that our life in this world is a blessing, it is also a duty, and also a struggle. It is a blessing, because God has given us the wonderful body with physical, mental, and spiritual powers. He has created all wonderful creations of Nature, which maintain our life, and without which we cannot live. Merciful God has so contrived that we can get from Nature everything that we require for maintaining our life provided we work for the same. Every moment we receive blessings of God in one way or the other. Rays of the sun, rains from the skies, plants and trees growing from the earth, and many other visible and invisible currents of Nature — are all blessings of God.

But our life is also a duty. As human-beings and as Zoroastrians, we have to do the duties of life : duty towards God, towards ourselves, and towards others. God has given us our life and all good things of life; and it is our duty to remember him and to thank Him by offering prayers, by leading a virtuous, and useful life. The prayer with a devoted, pure heart and dedicated pure mind purifies our feelings, elevates us in our life, and leads us on the path of purity, goodness, and duty (Y.58.1).

A Zoroastrian has to do his duty to himself. Our body is a sacred weapon of our soul in this life. It is, therefore, our duty to keep our body clean, pure, and healthy — in thought, word, and deed. We can discharge the duties of our life only if we have a clean, pure and healthy body and mind. Health, endurance, vitality and long life are the blessings from God; and a Zoroastrian prays

for the same, so that he can perform his duty and play his part in this life.

A Zoroastrian has to do his duty to others — members of his family and his community, other citizens and countrymen, members of humanity at large. The creations of Nature in this world are interdependent, and they help and support each other. For maintenance of our life, we depend on other creations of Nature. Similarly, it is our religious duty to help and support our needy brethren according to our means and ability. We can help and serve others by our thought, word, and deed. We can send our good thought for welfare and benefit of others, we can help others by word of our mouth and by our action. We can educate the unlearned, we can nurse the sick, we can help the poor and needy. Charity is a religious duty of a Zoroastrian. Every Zoroastrian is enjoined to keep his feet, hands, and intellect in readiness to do lawful and timely deeds and to undo unlawful and untimely deeds. (Visp. 15.1). According to the teaching of Ahunavar, service to humanity is service to God.

Virtues of a Zoroastrian Household

As depicted in the Avesta, an ideal Zoroastrian man or woman is one who observes Asha, who is healthy in mind and body, who is advanced in good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, with a sincere, devoted heart, reciting the holy words of prayer, self-sacrificing, leading a good life of wisdom, and one who prospers the world by good deeds.

Zoroastrianism inculcates active virtues of life. It is the duty of a Zoroastrian to lead a good life of virtue and industry, and to

find spiritual happiness in such a virtuous life; and also to teach and instruct others to lead a similar life. To be good and happy is essential, but it is not enough. We have to be good, virtuous, and happy, and also to make others good, virtuous, and happy.

According to Zoroastrian religion, marriage is a pious duty, and a married life is preferable to an unmarried life. It is incumbent on all able-bodied Zoroastrians to marry, and to establish a happy home, where a husband and his wife may live happily with their children and the members of the family. Happy married life depends on virtue, duty, and devotion to each other. In the words of Zarathushtra (Y. 53.4) :

These holy words of admonition
Do I utter unto you —
The bride and the bridegroom,
Do you engrave them in mind :
“Being girded with religious virtues,
Do you lead a life of Good Mind;
With holiness and virtue.
Do you love devotedly —
That indeed shall lead you both
To a good, happy married life!”

Zoroastrianism teaches dignity of labour. Proper use of hands and feet is advocated. To till and cultivate land ‘with the left hand and the right, with the right hand the left’, and to grow corn is as good as to increase holiness. Work is worship, and idleness is a sin against religion and society. It is stated that an idle man is a burden on human society and he has to wander from door to door in search of food.

Thrift and economy are also the important virtues of Zoroastrian daily life. It is enjoined that one must not waste even a trifling thing (Vd. 5.60).

“Not, indeed, Ahura Mazda has given acquired property to waste — neither of full value, nor (even) a trifle as much as a spinner is rejecting (while spinning).”

While thrift and economy are virtues, stinginess and miserliness are vices. Charitable disposition is specially extolled. Charity is an essential virtue of a Zoroastrian. The divine gifts of Good Mind are specially meant for those who work for welfare and uplift of the poor and needy. It is specially enjoined (Visp. 1.S.1) :

“Let us here do good industry to render the needy unneedy!”

Among other virtues of a Zoroastrian household may be mentioned : sincerity, respectability, obedience, peace, liberality, and humility. The Zoroastrians pray to God for these household virtues.

Catholicity and Civic Duties

In Zoroastrianism all creations of the world are sacred creations of God. A Zoroastrian in his daily prayer, and also in religious ceremonies, pays homage to the Spiritual Beings and respect to human beings, good animals, and besides these also to places, cities, fields, abodes, water-stores, waters, lands, trees, and ‘this earth and that sky, atmosphere, the stars, the moon, the sun, and the endless light (Y.1.16). The Yazats are promoting welfare and prosperity to the entire living world (Yt. 11.16, 21); and a Zoroastrian prays for prosperity of the living worlds (Y. 68.4).

Similarly, all human beings are creations of God, and they deserve respect and goodwill from each other, and they should live in peace and amity among themselves. Ahura Mazda pours down rains so that “my man may eat corn, and fodder (may grow) for the animals.” (Vd. 5.20).

Similarly, also the Pazand prayer :

“May goodness pour down from the sky,
may goodness grow from the earth.”

This is the prayer for prosperity and welfare of all peoples of the country, and of all mankind.

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ATAR 'THE FIRE'

The general Avesta term for the visible and invisible fire, heat energy, that is pre-vading the Universe, is atar. It is also the name of the Yazata presiding over 'fire, heat' As a luminous creation in direct and close contact with human beings, the fire in one form or the other plays an important part in the religious life of man, and in almost all religions of the world. In the Zoroastrian Religion the fire is especially venerated as the shining emblem of Ahura Mazda. In the Avesta, Atar is addressed as 'the Yazata' full of glory and full of healing remedies' (N.Y. 5.6). Avesta Atar is called master of the house" (Y. 17.11), and also 'the Fire of Ahura Mazda', and more familiarly and more frequently 'the son of Ahura Mazda' (Y. 25.7; 71.10). As 'the son' and, therefore, the representative of Ahura Mazda, the presence of fire in all Zoroastrian ceremonies is inevitable.

The Fire is venerated, prayers are offered unto the fire, and the devotee longs to approach Ahura Mazda through the fire.

(1) Y. 43.9: "Then, shall I regard offerings of prayers of Asha unto Thy Fire so long as I have powers!"

(2) Y. 36.1: "Through the activities of this fire, first do we approach Thee, O Mazda Ahura! Thee, Thee, O Most Holy Spirit!"

Five Kinds Of Fire

"Ahura Mazda first thought: the heavenly realms filled with lights." Here is a amazing fact of creations. By the thought force of Ahura Mazda, the creations were created with light. Hence, fire, or light, or heat energy is at the basis of the creations, and it permeates the Universe. The very existence, management, growth, and development of the creations depend on fire in one form or the other. There are five kind of fires (visible and invisible) remembered in Y. 17.11,

The Fire as the Divine Judge

Atar Yazat, presiding over the red, blazing fire, shall act as a divine judge at the consummation — the final judgment. The fire as the divine judge appears variously in the Avesta, and justice will be administered through heat, fire in various forms — 'mental, molten metal, shining metal.'

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In the Pazand Patet (the prayer of repentance), a Zoroastrian repents for remissness and for sin and crime, which he or she might have committed knowingly or unknowingly, in relation to his or her family members, to other citizens and countrymen, and to the members of humanity. A Zoroastrian prays:

"If any sin has arisen by any unlawful conduct towards (my) father, mother, sister, brother, wife, child, husband, master, near relatives, (also towards) people of the world, partners, neighbours, countrymen, (and) in relation to the guest, and if I have been guilty of the sin (committed) by (my) thought, word, deed, by body, by soul, physically, spiritually, (then) do I repent for it".

Further in Patet:

"Do I repent for every kind of sin, every kind of most grievous sin, . . . every kind of sin arising from the sin, which might have arisen in relation to Hormazd, in relation to mankind (mardom), in relation to man species (mardom sardagan), all species (hama sardagan)."

Similarly, in the Pazand prayer, a Zoroastrian prays for "prosperity of mankind, of man species, all species." Here all races of mankind are clearly mentioned.