

Five Ancient Customs

Beautiful teachings are wonderful things. But they are abstract. Whereas our reality includes the existence of matter. Whether it is songs, or music, or dancing, or ceremonies, or fragrance, or flowers, or candles, or poetry, or visual arts or customs, we seem to require things of the senses, to make our ideas and experiences meaningful, to inspire us, to comfort us, to bring joy to our lives. The five seasonal festivals that have been celebrated by Zoroastrians since ancient times, fulfills this need, in part, and I am glad that we have Dr. Jenny Rose's essay on Noruz, the most important of the five seasonal festivals.

Ancient Zoroastrians also created some other customs (which are rather lovely) to bring Zarathushtra's teachings to life. Today, many of these customs have fallen into disuse. Many of them are no longer remembered. Others are a part of remote rituals, in languages that we no longer understand. I would like to sketch here, five beautiful ancient customs which were generated by Zarathushtra's teachings. These are not earth-shaking customs. They are just a few of the many small things that help to bring joy to our lives, and make religion a living experience. Each one of them could easily be adapted to become meaningful to our lives today. Some of these customs have been touched upon in other chapters. But I think it would be useful to collect them here for the convenience of those who may not be interested in the other chapters in which they are mentioned, but who may be interested in thinking about these customs, with a view to adapting them to life today.

1. *Celebrating with generosity.*

A foundational teaching of Zarathushtra is generosity. It is a key quality of the true order of existence, *aša* ~ an attribute of the Divine which man also has (although not completely ... yet!). In fact, it is the way in which Zarathushtra describes those who choose correctly, and how salvation is earned ("[...the beneficent have correctly chosen...](#)" Y30:3, Insler 1975; "[...let salvation be granted to the beneficent man...](#)" Y34:3, Insler 1975).¹ The meaning of 'beneficence' includes a good, loving, bountiful generosity. Indeed, even a story in an ancient text speaks of giving alms and "entertainment" for the benefit of those in need ~ a higher level of generosity than giving just necessities.²

The *Shahnamah* is full of instances in which ancient Iranians celebrated good occasions, and times of thanksgiving, by giving to those in need.

Among ancient stories (in addition to other charitable activities), we find a custom in which on good occasions such as birthdays, New Year, weddings, the birth of a child, et cetera, kings and other wealthy persons used to have themselves weighed in gold, and other precious things, which were then distributed to the poor. Other wealthy persons perhaps might have themselves weighed in various kinds of food (perhaps food staples such as grains, barley, beans, et cetera), or coins, which were then distributed to the poor. And the less wealthy did not bother with the (rather public) custom of having themselves weighed, but just distributed money, food, clothing, (and perhaps entertainment?) to those in need, as a part of celebrating such special occasions.

This last custom survived (in modified form) as late as the mid 20th century in India, when I was a child in a Zoroastrian household. I remember my mother (in addition to other charitable activities), providing feasts and clothing for poor people on various good occasions, and sweetmeats for their

children ~ great big containers of warm jalebies, dripping with cardamon flavored syrup, sprinkled with pistachios and topped with thin silver, (all of which of course I had to sample to ensure quality control, as I helped to wrap them in individual packets). A drop in the bucket? Of course. But each drop makes a difference. Each such drop repeatedly brought joy to a lot of children and to many hungry adults. Many such drops would help to fill ... a bucket? ... a lake? ... an ocean? ... existence?

In our times (according to ABC news, some years ago),³ every day, in every county in the United States, there are children who wake up hungry, go to school hungry, and at night go to sleep hungry ~ 1 in 4 children in the United States (a fraction in a total of 17 million in 2011) did not have enough food to sustain health. And that does not include the numbers of adults, including the homeless, who also experience hunger. To say nothing of the adults and children world wide for whom hunger and starvation are a grim reality.

Zarrir Bhandara (a Zoroastrian priest in California), tells the following true story about an elderly, somewhat frail Zoroastrian gentleman, the late Mr. Motivala (whose story I tell here with the consent of his family) who, by 1992, had for about 25 years been making soup and sandwiches which he distributed every Sunday (not just on good occasions), to anyone who was hungry, in poor (crime infested) neighborhoods in Los Angeles. In 1992, after the Rodney King riots had ended, small, sporadic outbursts of rioting continued to occur for several days, and offices in Los Angeles used to close early, to avoid such dangers. However, Mr. Motivala had to stay late one evening, to complete some work. It was dark when he left his office. His car was parked about a block away. At that moment, a riot erupted. There was chaos everywhere, and he started to walk fast to get to his car. He heard running footsteps pounding behind him. He started to run himself. But the footsteps overtook him, and their owner said *don't be afraid*. He was there to protect him. I do not know the exact words this 6 + ft. African American guardian angel used. But he mentioned that the food Mr. Motivala had given him on many Sundays, had made a difference when he really needed it.

We may not all be as courageous as this elderly Zoroastrian gentleman. And there is nothing that any of us could do that would totally eliminate hunger in the United States, let alone in the world. Nor could most of us weigh ourselves in gold, jewels, or foodstuff, for distribution to the hungry!

But (in addition to other charitable activities) we could revive the ancient custom of celebrating at least good occasions by being generous to those in need. We could give food, clothing, blankets (and perhaps entertainment?), to homeless shelters, food banks, shelters for abused women and children, assisted living facilities for the elderly, and other such places (without condescension, without fanfare, with friendship), in thanksgiving and celebration, on birthdays, on New Year's day, on weddings, on the birth of children or grandchildren, on all the many good occasions that bless our lives; and also to commemorate the death anniversaries of loved ones. Or perhaps a small on-going monthly contribution (which will make you feel happy as you tackle the aggravation of paying your other monthly bills!) Or perhaps taking a meal over to a sick neighbor. All practical ways of bringing to life a teaching that places a high priority on generosity. The revival and evolution of an ancient custom.

2. *The custom of feeding animals and birds.*

Zarathushtra's teachings are not homocentric. In the Gathas, his system of metaphors demonstrates that other life forms and the natural elements, are integrated into his perception of existence, the Divine, and the path to the Divine.⁴ A reverence for other life forms and the natural elements is seen even more strongly in certain later YAv. texts.⁵

In ancient times (but many centuries after Zarathushtra), it was customary to set aside a portion of each meal for dogs, a custom which survived as late as the 20th century in India.⁶

This custom evolved into one of feeding birds and other animals as well (that were not pests). Here (in an article that follows), Rusi Sorabji (endearingly) describes how his wife's parents practiced this custom in India.⁷ Today, many of us live in urban environments. Except for our pets, we are not in daily contact with a wide variety of animal and bird life, as were ancient Zoroastrians. Nevertheless, we could revive the ancient custom of feeding birds and animals by adapting it to our own times ~ helping animal shelters, helping sanctuaries that give old or abused animals a peaceful, safe home; filling bird feeders for hummingbirds and other birds (using different kinds of feeders so the larger birds do not crowd out the little birds). I have loved the many dogs who were my pets throughout my life. But even if we do not have dogs (or cats) as pets, the ways of being generous to animals and birds are limited only by our imaginations. The key is to remember the idea behind the ancient custom and adapt it to our own times and our own environment, thereby, (with small insignificant acts) helping to make existence more joyful for other life forms.

3. The custom of creating one fire from many sources.

In a religion which does not make images of the Divine,⁸ both the Gathas and the later texts use various forms of light, including fire, as a symbol of the Divine.⁹ Certain Younger Avestan and Pahlavi texts speak of the fire in all things ~ in mankind, in animals, in trees, in plants, in clouds, in the world itself.¹⁰ To see fire (a symbol of the Divine) in all things is a way of conveying the idea that the Divine exists in all things. As a symbol of the Divine, it is understandable that fire also became a central feature of rituals ~ from the little devotional household flame, to the temporary fires used by priests in ceremonies in secular settings (like the jashan ceremony), to the permanent fires housed in community centers and fire temples.

According to a very lovely tradition recorded in ancient texts, the fire in an atash bahram (which term derives from two Av. words which mean 'the fire of victory (over evil)') is created by mixing many different fires ~ fire from lightning, the hearth fire, the fires used by different trades (a potter, a glass blower, a coppersmith, a goldsmith, a silversmith, an ironsmith, a steelsmith, a baker, a furnace worker, a tinsmith), a shepherd's fire, a warrior's fire, a ruler's fire, fire from a neighbor's hearth, fire from a burning corpse, and fire from burning trash).¹¹ These diverse fires were not just from Zoroastrian homes and businesses. One variation of this custom includes fire from "an idol-worshipper". And (after the Arab invasion of Iran) a "ruler's fire" would not have been from a Zoroastrian ruler.

So what was the person who invented this ritual trying to tell us? What teaching was he trying to remind us of, through this ritual of creating the highest ritual fire, symbolizing the Divine, from such diverse and ordinary sources? I think his intent was two-fold:

(1) To illustrate the idea that the sacred (symbolized by fire) exists in all things, and comes from all aspects of life;¹² and

(2) Fire from a burning corpse and from burning trash symbolizes that fire (truth personified) is more powerful than any source of pollution (symbolizing evil here) ~ in other words, visual imagery that captures a unique aspect of Zarathushtra's thought ~ that what is true, good, will eventually prevail (with certainty) over what is false, wrong.¹³

The Gathas do not describe any rituals.¹⁴ However, the meaning behind this ritual of creating one atash bahram fire from many different kinds of ordinary fires represent these 2 key concepts in Zarathushtra's thought ~ and you may find it stands for other aspects of his thought that do not presently occur to me. I therefore think this ritual likely originated in Zarathushtra's time or very soon after.

In some Methodist churches, the wedding ceremony includes the lighting of a unity candle. The two mothers (of the bride and groom) each light a candle, and then together they each use the flames from their two candles to light one large candle ~ signifying the joining of the two families.

But of course, the ancient Zoroastrian symbolism of creating the atash bahram fire does not apply only to the joining of two families, or even to the joining together of Zoroastrians. It reminds us that the Divine is an ever present reality in all of existence, and that the true good order of existence (which the Divine personifies) will ultimately (and with certainty) prevail over evil.

Today, when groups of people gather together, it would be an exciting creative challenge to use the tools available to us, to express this idea of creating one fire (or one light) from many different sources. At secular banquets in the USA, it is not unusual to have a candle at each table. Subject to insurance requirements (and the local fire regulations), we could adapt this custom of how an atash bahram fire is created, in our secular and religious gatherings today, by creating with safeguards a (small) community fire from the candles of each family or person who attends. In the alternative, if fire is not considered a safe option, with all the high-tech talents available to us, it should not be difficult to use light in place of fire, to express the underlying idea of creating one light from many different individual lights. A beautiful custom revived. A continuing and visual reminder of the Divine in all things, and the power of truth to defeat untruth.

4. *The custom of planting trees.*

Early Zoroastrians lived in a pastoral society. So it is not surprising that they valued trees, plants, medicinal herbs, and cultivation.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra uses a system of material metaphors from nature, each of which he links to a quality of the Divine (amesha spenta).¹⁵ The material metaphor which is linked with non-deathness (*amərətāt-*) is plants ~ implied in the Gathas, and specifically stated in the later texts.¹⁶ In addition to being warriors, and herdsman, ancient Zoroastrians of Zarathushtra's time period, also were artisans and craftsmen. And their skills evolved into farming, and also a tradition of planting trees in addition to the many flowers and medicinal herbs mentioned in ancient texts.¹⁷ Indeed, ancient Iran was famous for its roses and gardens.¹⁸

In the *Ashirwad* part of the Zoroastrian wedding ceremony, (composed in its present form, perhaps more than 2,000 years after Zarathushtra), the priest gives advice to the couple(s) being married on how they should live their lives in accordance with the requirements of the wisdom-worshipping religion (*mazdayasna*). He states (as translated by Shahin Bekhradnia),¹⁹

"... Here is some advice fundamental to our religion. Hear it and in your own lives practice it so that it may be the source of happiness to Ahura Mazda and of good fortune (to you)."

His advice includes the following in deference to "the law and custom" of "Amordad" (Av. *aməratāt*-whose material metaphor is plants):

"Drain stagnant water and waterlogged land and in its place create cultivated land. Plant trees and plants. Do not cut down young trees. ... Give herbs and medicines to the needy. Look after those who are ailing and in pain."

There are many ways to revive the spirit of this ancient custom recorded in the wedding ceremony (derived from more ancient customs). We could participate in neighborhood environmental clean up projects, or plant trees on Arbor Day, or make modest donations to plant trees (perhaps at one of the seasonal festivals, or at New Year's). There are so many ways to revive this ancient custom to suit today's needs.

In our ecologically stressed society, would it not be a good thing to revive this ancient custom and adapt it to our times, in ways that each person and each Zarathushti community might decide for themselves.

The Zoroastrians in Sydney Australia, invite those people who come to teach them about the religion, to plant a tree in their community center garden. A lovely way to celebrate the occasion (although I am ashamed to say that my painful and creaking joints were at odds with my delight with this idea, and rendered me a somewhat incompetent planter).

Today, most (allopathic) medicines are no longer plant based. But the idea of giving medicines and medical help to "those who are ailing and in pain", is as needed today as it was in ancient times, and could be expressed by assisting one of the many organizations that bring medical help to suffering people in the United States and Canada (our home, giving back to the country that has given so much to us), and all over the world. The possibilities are endless ~ limited only by our imaginations. The outcome can only be betterment, for ourselves, for each other, for our environment, our neighborhoods, our cities, our states, our nation, our world.

Just as a small stone dropped into a lake or river, spreads ripples in ever-expanding circles.

5. *The tradition of valuing truth.*

In the Gathas, the true order of existence (which includes factual truths as well as the truths of mind/heart/spirit ('truth' for short *aša*-) is an object of worship, reverence,²⁰ ["... As long as I shall be able, I shall respect that truth is to have a gift of reverence."](#) Y43:9, Insler 1975. In educating their children, the early Achaemenians' priority was teaching them to be truthful, in addition to shooting straight and riding well.

"Emphasis was laid on speaking the truth ... [also] the physical skills and virtues: riding, shooting the bow, and spear throwing, together with hunting and tracking. The life in the open was hardy, and there was training in leadership for those who would most require it."²¹

In times past, in both Iran and India, Zoroastrians had a reputation for honesty. It made them trusted business associates, advisors to kings (in India), and public figures.

How many Zoroastrians today define themselves and their highest priority, as 'truth'? Today's priorities seem to have shifted. The emphasis in many families is more on directing our children to earn well, and make money ~ and there is nothing wrong with that. These are important factors in supporting a family, increasing the well being of our societies, and leading comfortable lives (and I agree, it is easier to be good when one is not in financial want).

But we seem to have forgotten Zarathushtra's thought about what *leads* to prosperity, success, happiness. He teaches that (in the long run), we cannot be successful, we cannot prosper, we cannot be happy, if we are out of sync with truth (the true order of existence).²² But even so, in the Gathas prosperity and success are not ultimate objectives. They are not the pole stars of existence. They are merely collateral dividends.

We need remember and to teach our children (and ourselves) the high priority that Zarathushtra and our ancestors placed on truth ~ even through centuries of persecution. Indeed, we need to take it a step further. We should not be truthful (*ašavan-*) in order to prosper and be successful. We should be truthful for truth's own sake. This teaching of Zarathushtra found expression in another lovely maxim which we find perpetuated in YAv. texts. Should we not teach it to our children?

'(There is) one path, that of truth, all others (are) non-paths.' my translation.²³

aēvō paṇtā yō ašahe vīspe anyaešqm apaṇtqm

And what is the 'path of truth'? The path of truth includes intrinsic goodness in the superlative degree (*aša- vahišta-*). It is understanding truth (good thinking, *vohu- manah-*); embodying it with each beneficial thought, word and action (*spənta- ārmaiti-*). All of which generated another ancient sound byte ~

'Good thoughts, good words, good actions.'

And what is 'good'? What is 'truth'? Well, that is something we must search for ~ on-going ~ with our minds/hearts/spirits committed to discovering what, in a given situation, will promote the true (correct) good order of existence ~ an order of existence that is beneficial (*spənta-*), generous, full of lovingkindness, (*hudāh-*), the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness (*vahišta-*).

I really love the idea that ancient Zoroastrians ~ inspite of all the persecution they endured ~ maintained their commitment to, and were known for, their truth and goodness.

In Zoroastrian organizations today, we place great emphasis on the heritage of clothes, language, good food ~ all of which (especially good food) are great!

But let us not forget what has defined Zoroastrians over millennia, transcending changes in clothes, languages, and food. The commitment to truth ~ factual truths and the truths of mind/heart/spirit, with each choice in thought, word and action. This is the most precious heritage we have. We need to keep it alive ~ in ourselves, in our children, in our homes, in our professions, in our world. Today, truth, goodness seem to be endangered species. All the more does it need our passionate commitment. All the more does it need us to make it a reality in all aspects of our existence.

In conclusion: I have shown you five customs which ancient followers of Zarathushtra used to enrich their lives, to remind themselves of, and implement, his beautiful teachings. Are these customs worth remembering? reviving? Are they worth adapting to our own times, in our day-to-day lives?

You decide.

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¹ A loving, bountiful, generosity is a central quality of the true (correct) order of existence which the Divine personifies, as detailed in the following chapters in *Part One: Truth, Asha, and Love, and The Nature of the Divine*. Indeed, on the path of spiritual evolution, being 'fair', being 'just', is a good first step. But a higher step is a loving, good generosity. In describing a person who makes the correct choice, Zarathushtra does not describe him as 'just' or even as 'righteous'. He describes him as 'beneficent', ("...the beneficent have correctly chosen..." Y30:3, Insler 1975). Similarly he says "...let salvation be granted to the beneficent man..." Y34:3, Insler 1975. And he defines 'salvation' as the true (correct) good order of existence (which is a beneficent order of existence). See in *Part One: Truth, Asha, and A Question of Salvation*.

² This Pazand story (of the maiden at the bridge) is discussed in *Part One: Buried Treasure in Ancient Stories*. This Pazand story has its genesis in YAv. Fragments XXII, and XXIV.

³ As reported on line at abcnews.com/US/hunger_at_home.

⁴ See the following chapters in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Cow and its Network; Light, Glory, Fire; Earth, Waters and Plants; Molten metal; and A Question of Immanence*.

⁵ The reverence for natural elements is seen in many YAv. texts, and more particularly in the *Farvardin Yasht*, as discussed in *Part Two: A Question of Immanence*. In the later Zoroastrianism of the YAv. and Pahlavi texts, however, various life forms and natural elements were classified as 'good' and 'evil'. The things that were harmful to man (such as drought, wolves, et cetera) were considered intrinsically 'evil', the creation of the all-evil Devil (Ahriman, a name which actually means 'harmful or inimical mind', detailed in *Part One: Does The Devil Exist?*). The things that were helpful to man were classified as intrinsically 'good', the creation of the all-good Lord Wisdom, *Ahura Mazda*. This notion of cosmic dualism and its resulting good and bad material 'creations' is alien to the teaching of the Gathas, in which no part of the material existence is regarded as 'evil', see *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu, and Part Two: The Puzzle Of Creation*.

⁶ In the later texts, dogs were highly favored life forms because of their usefulness to man, especially in a pastoral society. I am indebted to Dr. Jehan Bagli for taking the time to give me the following textual sources regarding the custom of feeding dogs. Jehan Bagli is a priest, and past President of the Council of Zoroastrian priests (mobeds) in North America.

Avestan texts.

The *Husparam Nask* was a Younger Avestan text. No copies of this text exist today in Avestan. But certain parts of this Avestan text are described in a Pahlavi text called the 8th book of the *Dēnkard*, chapter 37, § 1 of which states (without details) that the *Husparam Nask* described the proper food to feed a shepherd's dog, a village dog, and a blood-hound. SBE Vol. 37, p. 114.

The *Videvdāt* (*Vendidad*), a late YAv. text (written in grammatically corrupt Avestan, long after Avestan times) prescribes severe punishments for giving bad food to various kinds of dogs, and prescribes what food should be given to the dog Ch. 13, Part 4, §§ 20 ~ 28, SBE Vol. 4, pp. 156 - 158.

It is worth noting that a variety of 'dogs' are described in the *Vendidad* including one which is described as "The dog with the prickly back, with the long and thin muzzle, the dog Vanghapara" which Darmesteter says is a hedge-hog. *Vendidad*, Ch. 13, §§ 1 ~ 4, SBE Vol. 4, pp. 152 ~ 153. So the Avestan word for 'dog' apparently included more animals than the English word 'dog', although today we have no way of knowing all of the different animals that may have been covered by the Avestan word.

Pahlavi texts.

The *Sad Dar* is a Pahlavi text (in many ways far, far removed from Zarathushtra's thought) which in its Introduction, states that "This is a book about the proper and the improper which is extracted from the good and pure religion of the Mazda-worshippers." (E. W. West translation, SBE 24, p. 255), indicating that it was recording existing and older materials, but we have no way of knowing the age or nature of its sources. The 31st subject discussed is the requirement that a part of each meal be set aside for feeding dogs. It states:

"The thirty-first subject is this, that every time they eat bread, it is necessary to withhold three morsels from their own bodies, and give them to a dog." Ch. 31, §1; E.W. West translation, SBE 24, p. 292.

"And, in former times, an allowance (*râtib*) of bread would have been made every day for the sake of the dogs, three times in summer and twice in winter, on this account that one wishes them to come to the assistance of his soul at the *Kinvad* bridge." Ch. 31, § 5; E. W. West translation, SBE 24, p. 293.

The requirement in § 1 (quoted above) of setting aside three morsels of bread in each meal, to feed dogs, would not have satisfied the hunger (or nutritional needs) of any of the many dogs that I have had as pets (unless perhaps each person in a large family did so). But according to Jehan Bagli, this requirement led to the custom of *Chom-e Shvaa*, known in Gujarati in India as '*kutra-no-buk*' ('the dog's portion').

Jehan Bagli also informs us that in Dhabar's *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others*, p. 259 (a work of which I do not have a copy), the *Rivayat* of Shapur Bharuchi states that the soul of a person who is fit for hell, but who takes care of a dog and gives him his morsel of food, will not experience demonic punishment. Although demonic punish and a punitive 'hell' are far removed from the thought of the Gathas, this passage indicates that to ancient Zoroastrians feeding dogs was considered a great virtue (and perhaps an insurance policy?).

Certain Avestan and Pahlavi texts, composed long after the Gathas, describe the good things that assist the transition of the soul (using the metaphor of the *Chinvat* bridge) from the mortal to the non-mortal existence, and the bad things which prevent this transition (see *Part One: Buried Treasure in Ancient Stories*). Feeding dogs is not one of these things. That the *Sad Dar* and the *Rivayat* (quoted above) see feeding dogs to be one of the good virtues that assist the soul's transition, or at least preclude its more severe punishments, indicates the high priority placed on feeding dogs in those times. (The notion of 'severe punishments' is far removed from Zarathushtra's thought, discussed in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution*; and in *Part Three: Adverse Consequences, Not Punishment*).

Jehan Bagli informs us that these texts later led to the custom in Iran, of giving a proper meal to the dog, ~ even of consecrated food ~ before the devotees receive their share. Thus (in my view), becoming a fear based self-serving custom, instead of the bountiful generosity to all the living, that Zarathushtra teaches.

⁷ See Rusi Sohrabji's essay in *Part One: Sohrabji, Feeding Birds & Dogs*.

⁸ As discussed in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*, although the Sasanians, sadly, did indeed so forget the original teachings. They made images, even of *Hormizd* (Av. *Ahura Mazda*), in addition to making images of the deities of the syncretized religion that Zoroastrianism had become during YAv. times (such as images of the goddess *Anahita*). A Sasanian rock carving at *Naqsh-e Rostam* shows the Sasanian king *Ardashir* on horse back, receiving the ring of sovereignty from '*Hormizd*' who is also on horse back ~ thus establishing that the Sasanians had long forgotten a foundational tenet of the religion ~ that it had no images of the Divine (*Thieme, Herodotus*). This is not a question of scholars interpreting that the person on horseback is *Hormizd*. Inscriptions on the flank of his horse itself identify the figure as the deity in 3 languages which read as follows,

In Middle Persian (Pahlavi) and Parthian "The image (is) this of *Hormizd*, the god."

In Greek, "This is the image of the god Zeus." Schmidt, *Persepolis III*, 1970, p. 123.

⁹ See *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*. In the Gathas, fire is most often used as a symbol/metaphor for truth ~ the true (correct) wholly good order of existence (*aša- vahišta-*). Each attribute of the Divine is some aspect of (or is equated with) this order of existence, which Wisdom personifies. See *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*.

¹⁰ These texts are discussed in more detail in *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*.

¹¹ Described in J. J. Modi 1922 *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, pp. 200 – 201, for more detail, see *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*.

¹² See in *Part Two: Light, Fire, Glory, and A Question of Immanence*.

¹³ Detailed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution; and A Question of Power*.

¹⁴ See *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*.

¹⁵ Discussed in *Part Two: A Question of Immanence*.

¹⁶ As detailed in *Part Two: Earth, Waters, Plants*.

¹⁷ Described in great detail in the Pahlavi *Bundahishn* Ch. 27, which gives an interesting insight into the kinds of edible and medicinal fruits and plants that were cultivated in those ancient times. In addition, although 'plants' collectively are the material counterpart of the divine attribute non-deathness *aməratāt-*, the *Bundahishn* associates a flower with each amesha spenta and the other concepts/entities for whom the days and months of the calendar were named ~ giving a lovely insight into the kinds of flowers which were then grown (and the climate which would have supported them) detailed in a ft. in *Part Two: Earth, Waters, Plants*.

¹⁸ Stronach, in his wonderful book *Pasargadae*, (which details the archeological excavations and discoveries in and around the palaces built by Cyrus II (the Great), the king who first established the multi-national empire which today is called the Achaemenian Empire), has a chapter called "The Royal Garden" (pp. 107 - 112) which demonstrates, using available evidence, that the palaces grounds were spacious and well-watered; that they included stone water courses, stone basins, other water conduits of brick and pottery, and two small garden pavilions; and that each inner palace with its stately colonnades and deep, shadowed porticoes would first have been glimpsed amidst a profusion of trees, shrubs and grasses. Stronach states that the water courses of the Royal Garden covered a length of over 1,100 meters (discovered after 1950, first by Sami, and then by Stronach's team). Stronach notes that pottery water basins, water channels, and water pipes have been excavated also in Persepolis, (citing excavations in 1971 - 1972). This irrigation system would have watered the gardens around the palaces of Persepolis, built by Darius I and added to by his successor kings.

¹⁹ All quotations here from the Zoroastrian wedding ceremony have been translated by Shahin Bekhradnia in an unpublished piece, and used here with her kind permission.

²⁰ See *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*.

²¹ The quotation is from an essay by J. M. Cook, *The Rise of the Achaemenids & Establishment of Their Empire*, in CHI Vol. 2, p. 236. Cook states that this description of the education of youngsters in Achaemenian times comes from Greek sources ~ Herodotus, Xenophon, Plato and Strabo.

²² Discussed in *Part One: Joy, Happiness, Prosperity*.

²³ This teaching is quoted in more than one YAv. text, all of which are referenced in *Part One: The Search For Truth*.