

South London Inter-Faith Society: Discussion points

Death and Disposal of the Dead (Wall breach; Mortuaries; *Dakhmas*)

***Fravashis* (Ancestor-worship > “Guardian Angels” > Universalism)
Annual Commemoration of *Fravashis* (“Muktad” 10 days)**

Multiple Souls; Ghouls; Ghosts; Things that go “Bump” in the Night

Heaven, Hell, etc. – 3 Days/Nights (non-meat); Dawn of 4th day

The Bridge; The Judgements; *Daena* (2 forms); The Dogs

***Gathas*: Life-affirming || Physical + Mental : Body + Soul Prayed for
the bereaved || Alleviation of Suffering throughout || *Daena***

***Arda Wiraz Namagh* : Journeys into the Hereafter; (On grieving)**

Material Body; Celestial Soul

Zoroastrian texts on Living; Dying; Death; Disposal of the Dead; Afterworld and Afterlife.

(A) *Gatha* 46.10 (+11); (B) *Vandidad*; (C) *Hadhokht Nask*; (D) *Fravardin Yasht*; (E) *Arda Wiraz Namagh*.

(A) (Zarathushtra's *Gatha Ushtavaiti* 4) *Yasna* 46.10-11 : “Whoever, man or woman, will offer me that which You, O *Mazda*, knows to be for the best existence – truth for Truth, and the governance of Good Thought ... with all these shall I cross the Bridge of Judgement” || “The false priests and rulers have yoked us to evil actions for the destruction of mankind and existence. For these their own soul and spiritual worth did vex them at the Bridge of Judgement to become guests in the House of Deceit for all time”.

(B) *Vandidad*: “When passing to the other world, no soul will welcome him and sustain him through the howls and travails in that other world. Neither will those dogs that keep the Bridge of Judgement help that departing soul through those howls and travails of that other world” (Ch.13.9).

“Then comes the well-shapen, robust and tall-formed maiden [his/her *Daena*] with the dogs at her sides She makes the soul of the righteous go up above the heavenly mountain; above the Bridge of Judgement she places it in the very presence of the heavenly beings” (Ch.19.30)

(C) *Hadhokht Nask*: “When one of the *righteous* faithful departs this life, where does his soul abide on that night?” – “It takes its seat near the head, chanting the *Ushtavaiti Gatha*, proclaiming happiness: ‘May that man be happy, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives full grant to his wishes’ On that night the soul tastes as much of the pleasure as the whole of the living world can enjoy At the end of the third night, when dawn breaks, the soul of the righteous senses it wandering amidst a garden, sweet-scented in a gentle zephyr wafted from the South ... and in that breeze appears to that soul the likeness of a beautiful young maiden. And the soul of the righteous asks of her who she is. To which she replies that she is his own good conscience – of his own good thoughts, good speech, and good works. (After further explanation of that soul's goodness) the two

take the First Good Thought Step, then the Second Good Word Step, and thirdly the Good Deed Step leading to the Paradise of Endless Lights where dwells *Ahura Mazda* amidst all the departed Righteous Souls” (Ch.II extracts.) [Ch. III deals with the fate of the wicked soul]

(D) *Fravardin Yasht*: [Note: the *Fravashis* are guardian spirits of all creation which play a complex role in Zoroastrianism – they are one short of a hundred thousand; they are ancestor-spirits; they are one of the spiritual elements of the human personality]

“Said Ahura Mazda to Zarathushtra Spitama: ‘You must proclaim, O Zarathushtra the pure-minded, the vigour, the strength, the glory, the help and the joy that are in the Fravashis of the faithful – the awesome, the vanquishing Fravashis; proclaim how they bring help, how they, the Fravashis of the faithful, bear assistance to me” (Yasht 13.1)

“Through their splendour and their glory, do I, Ahura Mazda, maintain the sky, spiritually created, with ends lying afar” (2-3)

“I maintain the wide earth, Mazda-made, that bears all that is fine, that bears all the material world, the living and the dead, and the high mountains with rich pastures, rivers and streams that enrich plants that nourish animals and men, that nourish the Aryan nations; that nourish the five kinds of animals; all to help the righteous” (9-10)

“The Fravashis of the righteous are the most powerful .. Of the past, the present, and those to be born. The Fravashis of the *living righteous*, O Zarathushtra, are more powerful than those of the *righteous deceased*” (17)

(E) *Arda Wiraz Namagh*: “And I came to a place and I saw a wide, mighty river, difficult of fording beside which were many souls and guardian angels. Some were not able to cross; some were crossing with great difficulty; and some were crossing easily. || And I asked, ‘What is this river, and who are these people who are thus troubled?’ My guides *Sraosha* [the embodiment of the Religion] and *Adur* [the genius of Fire] replied, ‘This river is the many tears which men shed in mourning their departed, and they mourn, grieve, and lament, and shed tears unnecessarily, thus increasing this river. || ... Tell those in the world of the living, ‘While in the world do not irreligiously mourn, and grieve, and lament, for the souls of your departed shall receive that much harm and difficulty’” [Ch.16]