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July 2002 Rs 20



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Arda Viraf Nameh

The national religion of Persia from the invasion of Alexander to the accession of Ardashir Babagan had become much corrupted. To inspire religiosity among the populace, many of whom were losing faith, Babagan appealed to the pious individuals in his land to restore the glory of the exalted Zoroastrian religion. The seven chosen for the purpose decided that one of them, Arda Viraf would make a seven-day journey to heaven and hell and recount in the presence of the Zoroastrian fraternity the experiences of his supernatural journey. The detailed narration of this sojourn thus constitutes the Zend treatise *Arda Viraf Nameh* which has since been translated into modern Persian, Sanskrit, Gujarati and English.

This treatise "is a mythical account of a pious man's journey to heaven and hell. Some of the narratives, especially those of the infernal regions, are without any (sequential flow). But notwithstanding that the account is fabulous, it is held in high esteem by the Parsis on account of the morality which it preaches," writes Dastur Kaikhusru Dastur Jamaspji Jamasp Asa in the 1902 edition of *Arda Viraf Nameh* which carries the Pahlavi text with an introduction, notes, Gujarati translation and Persian version of Zartosht Behram in verse.

"In the *Gathas* it is simply stated that the sinful shall go to the Drujo-demana (the abode of the wicked) and there they shall be given vile food to eat. On this groundwork our pious visionary has given his fancy wilder flights. Nowhere in the Avestan writings do we meet with such an elaborate description of the rewards of the pious and the punishments of the wicked," adds Jamasp Asa.

Nevertheless, "Many Parsis believe in the reality of the narrative and regard the revelations as genuine, whilst others holding a more philosophic view look upon the work as simply a more imaginative picture of the future destiny of (men) who follow the good or bad examples described in the revelations. ... The description which the Parsi sage gives of heaven and hell, the happy state in which the good and virtuous souls were located, and the torments and miseries which those who had walked in evil ways were condemned to suffer are eminently calculated to stimulate virtuous conduct and induce the bad to amend their ways and lead lives of piety and holiness," stated Dossabhoy Framjee in his *History of the Parsis*, Vol II.

Capt J. A. Pope's English translation in 1816, the edited text of which is being reprinted by *Parsiana* in this

issue, was based on three Persian works, Nashirvan Kermanee's prose and Zartosht Behram's verse and prose. Whilst reducing the length of the text from around 13,000 words to 10,000 words *Parsiana* has ensured that the author's style and narrative have been retained in the process of editing repetitive descriptions and phraseology. The spelling of Arda Viraf is in keeping with Jamasp Asa's usage. In the case of other individuals and religious terminology we have retained Pope's spellings whilst taking the liberty of amending spellings of common English words as per *Parsiana*'s style. We are grateful to the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute for giving us access to these two works.

One of the important messages conveyed by Arda Viraf stresses on the need for every individual to prepare for the soul's departure from this world to the higher realms just as one allows for different contingencies during life's many sojourns. "Take less care of your body and more of your soul; the pains and aches of the body are easily cured but who can minister to the diseases of the soul?" reminds the text before proffering advice on the two important qualifications to be worthy of God's friendship for the final journey: desist from sin and be grateful for His many blessings.

...

Ardashir Babagan, (the fifth descendant from Darab II who commenced his reign about the year 202 CE) having settled the Persian monarchy by the conquering of the provinces, and the putting to death of 90 kings who refused to acknowledge his authority: and being also desirous to establish the national religion in its wonted purity, collected together all the priests, doctors, etc of the Magian religion, to the amount of 40,000, and addressed them as follows:

"The revolution caused by the invasion of Alexander having destroyed the evidences of our holy religion, it is my wish that proper persons be selected from out of your number to collate and collect the laws left us by our prophet Zaratush, that we may follow these laws, and get rid of the heresies that have been from time to time introduced, and of the schisms that exist amongst us; for this purpose let a selection be made out of your number, that this desirable object may be in the end obtained." According to the king's order 4,000 were selected out of the 40,000, which being reported to him, he ordered another selection to be made, and out of the 4,000, 400 were chosen, men of the most approved abilities, all of them being conversant with the mysteries of the *Zend Avesta*.

The king being farther intent on having the most able and clever men appointed to this business, ordered another



Satan enters the universe All illustrations courtesy: *In Search of My God*

selection to be made, and out of the 400, 40 only were selected. A farther selection being made, seven only remained out of the 40, who were most holy men, without blemish, and who had never willfully committed the least crime or sin against God or man. These seven were taken before the king who explained to them his wishes with respect to the laws restoring the true religion of Zeratush to its ancient purity; but having himself also many doubts, he expressed a hope that these holy men would be able to convince not only himself, but the population of his empire, of the truth and sanctity of the Magian faith by some miracle.

The seven holy men assented, and having pitched on one of their number, the six addressed the king as follows: "Arda Viraf, oh king! is ready to convince you of the truth of our holy religion by a miracle, and we beg leave to recommend him to your majesty as the most holy man in your vast empire; he has been devoted to the study of divine things since the age of seven years, and is infinitely our superior in every thing; we shall assist him to the best of our power in this grand undertaking; and for the better understanding of this, the soul of Arda Viraf will take its flight to the presence of God, and will return with proofs that will convince the nation of the truth and sanctity of the Magian religion." Arda Viraf assented unto this and explained his belief in the goodness of God who would permit this miracle to be performed to retrieve so many people from the sin of heresy and schism.

The king being well pleased at this determination, accompanied these holy men and the priests, with his whole court, to the Temple of Fire, and joined with them devoutly in prayer; and Arda Viraf having performed the usual ablutions,

and attired himself in garments of the purest white; also put on the punam (badan), and perfumed himself according to the rites of the Magian religion, again presented himself, in an attitude of prayer and humility, before the sacred fire.

At this moment the sisters of Arda Viraf, seven in number, arrived at the temple in tears, and represented to the king that Arda Viraf was their only brother whom they all looked up to for protection and support; that they had heard of his intention of leaving them in order to perform a miracle; that such presumption might or might not be acceptable to God, and if their brother did not return, they should be left in the world without any protector, as their parents were both dead.

The king and the dustoors assured them that they had nothing to fear; that their brother was under the special protection of heaven, and that in seven days he would be restored to them; and having reassured them of this, they were dismissed from the assembly.

After this the king, with his suite, and the 40,000 priests, formed a circle around the temple (which was given up entirely to Arda Viraf and his six associates), for the better preventing of any kind of disturbance or molestation...

Arda Viraf having finished his prayers, reposed himself on a couch prepared for him, and his associates brought him some consecrated wine in a golden cup, and besought him to drink one portion out of three in faith and truth; and the second portion, with the same fear and respect, for truth; and the third portion, with the promise of performing only good actions. After having drank the wine, he composed himself to rest, and continued in this state of repose and abstraction for seven days and seven nights, during which time his six associates continued watching and prayed, as did the priesthood who, with the king and his court, had formed a circle on the outside of the temple.

On the expiry of the seven days and nights Arda Viraf gave some signs of animation, and after some time sat up on the couch, to the great joy of his six associates who saluted him with great pleasure: and the king having been made acquainted with the circumstance, came also to make his congratulations, and desired that he would lose no time in informing them of what he had seen, that they might also understand. Arda Viraf replied, "I am quite exhausted, oh king! with long fasting, but after... I have refreshed myself with food, and returned thanks to God for his goodness, I will relate to you what I have seen and heard." Refreshments having been brought, of which he partook, he ordered that a writer should be brought, who might write down what he should relate both of heaven and of hell, that all people might know the rewards for the good, and the punishments that attended the wicked doer...

Arda Viraf commenced his relation as follows:

"After I had drank the consecrated wine, and I had reposed my body to rest, and given my mind up to the adoration of God, methought my soul took its flight towards the holy regions, where Serosh izad appeared unto me, and beckoned me towards him, when, after giving and receiving the customary salutations, Serosh izad said to me, 'You have made a long journey in the faith. I am happy to see you in these blessed regions, and your escape from that world of wickedness gives me great pleasure; but, Arda Viraf, you have come before your time, what is the occasion?' Arda Viraf replied in accents of complacency, 'I have been sent, oh Serosh izad! by the king, by the priests, and by the voice of the nation in

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general, on this embassy, to know of heaven and hell, in order that heresy and schism be banished from the earth, and that the worship of the true God be restored to its wonted purity.'

"On saying this Serosh izad took hold of my arm, and began as follows: 'If your heart is clean, and faith true, put yourself in an attitude of ascending.' I immediately lifted one of my feet, as if preparing to mount a ladder, when Serosh izad again said, 'If your tongue is free from guile, lift the other foot,' which I accordingly did. Serosh izad again said, 'If your faith is in good works, take the third step.' I did so, and found myself close to the Chunwat Phool, or the Bridge of Life and Death, and it appeared to me to be a broad and good road.

Serosh izad desired me to cast my eyes towards the lower world. I saw the soul of a good man, that had just escaped out of its earthly tenement, and was seated at the bed's head of the deceased, and heard it express itself as follows: 'The souls of good men are happy when they die; and as I have endeavored to do good, and have walked in the knowledge and love of God, I am now rewarded, for the bridge appears plain and broad.' And it had to Arda Viraf the semblance of a garden of flowers, and perfumed as if with amber and musk, and as a wind that came from the south, in which appeared the countenance of a virgin, resplendent with beauty, and whose flowing ringlets waved in the breezes; my sight fixed on her, and I saw her approach the soul that I had seen depart; and the soul of the departed having perceived this beautiful vision, felt glad and pleased; and being assured, by the benignity visible in the countenance, addressed it in those words: 'Who are you? I never saw anything so beautiful in the lower world.' The apparition replied, 'You have lived well and righteously; I am compounded of your virtues, and shall become still more beautiful in portraying the faith, hope and charity in which you have lived, the care with which you have preserved the sacred fire, and the zeal with which you have performed all the ceremonies prescribed by the laws as handed down by the prophet Zeratush.'

"The complacency with which this was uttered caused pleasure and goodwill towards each other, and inspired the soul of the departed with implicit confidence, that they journeyed across the bridge together hand in hand. The first step they took placed them in Sitar pia, (the second heaven); the second step they found themselves in Mah pia, (the third heaven); the third step in Koorshad pia, (the fourth heaven); and the fourth step in Geroos man, (the fifth heaven).

"When Serosh izad laid hold of my arm (Arda Viraf now talks of himself), and we proceeded to the top of the bridge, one side of which appeared in full splendor of light, and the other in total darkness, I heard a strong and extraordinary voice, which, on looking forwards, I perceived to come from a dog, that was chained with a collar and chain of gold, near the light side of the bridge. I was at first afraid of his barking, and of the huge teeth he displayed, and said to myself this monster may devour me; but on reflection, I said why should he do me harm, I have walked in truth and holiness all my life,

why should I be afraid?

"Serosh izad now spoke to me in encouraging accents, 'Don't be alarmed; you that have lived so holily can have no cause for fear; you are under the especial protection of God, and I am with you, and Dham izad is also near you, and Roshni izad, and Ashtad izad, and Niece Vay and Deen izad are also with you, and Ader Korac is not far off.' I then addressed them all, (for on Serosh izad's naming them they had become visible), and asked them, 'Why is this dog here? For what purpose is he here placed? And why does he make so great a noise?' To which Serosh izad replied, 'He makes this noise to frighten Ahriman, and keeps watch here to prevent his approach; his name is Zeriug Goash, and the devils shake at his voice; and any soul that has, during its residence in the lower world, hurt or ill used, or destroyed any of these animals, is prevented by Zeriug Goash any further proceeding across the bridge; and Arda Viraf, when you return again to the world, as one of the first duties, enjoin the taking care of these animals.' On saying this Serosh izad... led me forward across the bridge, when the throne of Mehr izad came in view, with Roshni izad standing by him, holding in his hands the scales of justice, made of

pure gold, and having on his right hand, and on his left, 5,000 angels, and whose different petitions he can hear at once, and if written can see at one glance...

"At this time I perceived the soul that I had before met with, and also a great and resplendent light, in the midst of which were placed all those of my family who had departed in the true faith; they approached me with pleasure and rejoicing, and thus addressed me: 'You have also escaped from the lower world that abounds with sin and pain, and have come to these happier regions where the voice of joy and gladness is only heard.' Whilst conversing in this manner, the angel Bahman um Shasfund appeared, and taking me by the arm said, 'I will show you the golden throne, whose name is Arsh Koursee.' Accordingly I went with him to the higher regions where I saw a throne so resplendent that I am quite unable to describe; the awe with which it inspired me, or the sensations of pleasure that I felt; the throne was surrounded by myriads of ministering angels. Serosh izad said to me, 'Make your obeisance to the throne of God,' which I accordingly did, with a humble mind and grateful heart, and was conducted back to Chunwat Phool, by Serosh izad; where on one side of the bridge I saw a great multitude, standing in their proper vestments, in an attitude of apathy and indifference: Serosh izad... (explained), 'The name of this place is Hamistan behest, or the first heaven; and the people you see will there remain until the day of judgment. They are those whose good works exactly counterbalance their evil ones; but if either preponderated, they would go to either a better or worse place. This is their punishment, and they are exposed to the vicissitudes of heat and cold, and feel most acutely their situation.'

"Serosh izad then brought me unto Sitar pia behest, when I saw a great concourse of people whose countenances shone

—❦—

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Zoroaster battling the demons

like as many stars... Serosh izad (explained), 'The souls that you see here belonged to those who were blessed with riches, and who did good with them, but not so much as they might have done, and this from no unwillingness to do good, but from indolence and want of activity; they are here placed, and can never leave it.'

'Serosh izad then took me to Mah pia behest (the third heaven) when I saw a great number of souls, and the light emitted from their countenances resembled that of the moon in full splendor... Serosh izad (explained), 'The name of this place is Mah pia behest..., and the souls you see here are those of the good, and well intentioned, but who from indolence performed the worship of the true God in a careless and negligent manner; here they are destined to remain for ever, but with the knowledge of there being a still higher reward; and also of knowing that if they had performed their duty more carefully in the lower world, that they might have attained a still higher reward.'

'We then proceeded farther, and came to a place whose unusual splendor dimmed my sight, when I saw a great number of souls dressed in rich habiliments, and all seated on golden thrones... like so many kings... Serosh izad (explained), 'This place is called Koorshad pia behest, (or the fourth heaven); the souls who here reside are of men who have walked in the ways of holiness and devotion all their lives, and have performed all the duties enjoined by the laws with zeal and activity for which they are rewarded in the manner you see.'

'We then went forward, and came to a place of such splendor that nothing else was visible; and in the contemplation of such splendor my sight failed, and my limbs and my

senses became confused. Serosh izad reassured me, and told me, 'This is the place of Purwa degar or Ozmusd; make your salutations;' which I did by prostrating myself in the most humble and grateful manner: and soon after a voice, in a tone of goodness and complacency, issued from out of the midst of the light, and addressed Serosh izad, and said to him, 'Show and explain to Arda Viraf the secrets of heaven and hell, and support and comfort him.' The voice also restored to me the full use of my senses, which had become confused; and Serosh izad gave me a lozenge to eat which buried in oblivion all that had passed in the other world and turned my thoughts only towards God; and I found myself, by its virtues, enabled to encounter the splendor of the place without pain, or fear and trembling. After having made another obeisance, we made some steps backward, and perceived at a distance another light, in the midst of which appeared Ardebehest um Shasfund, coming towards us.

'I was preparing to salute him, but was prevented by his first saluting me, by saying, 'Oh, Arda Viraf! I hope you are well; I am much rejoiced in meeting you in this place, and in such good company; and at the same time, I am sorry to be forced to remind you of your having put wet wood on the sacred fire.' To which I replied, 'I have now no recollection of having done so, nor any recollection of what I did in the lower world, but it is impressed on my mind, and I always made it a rule to select the best and driest wood for that purpose.'

'Ardebehest replied, 'Let this be a constant rule, that the wood for the sacred fire be always 12-month old.'

'After which Serosh izad and Ardebehest took hold of my arm and we proceeded forward and came to a river which they told me was composed of the juices that issued out of the wet wood and yielded an offensive smell; and Ardebehest again said to me, 'Take care that the burning of dry wood is inculcated.'

'From hence we proceeded to Geroos man (the fifth heaven) which appeared to me to be composed of diamonds and rubies, and the splendor of which surpassed that of the sun at noon day, and bore resemblance to the flashes of vivid lightning... Serosh izad (explained), 'This is Geroos man, the residence of the truly faithful. The gems represent their virtues, but their souls are absorbed in the splendor which cannot be seen.'

'I was then carried forward by my two conductors, and came to Aser Roshni (the sixth heaven) where an immense number of souls were collected, clothed in dresses of gold and silver, and golden crowns on their heads, and their countenances emitted a mild splendor, and they smiled with complacency and benignity on me, so that I became lightsome and full of gladness... Serosh izad and Ardebehest um Shasfund (explained), 'These are the souls of those who practiced the virtues of liberality and generosity; and who searched out proper objects for the exercise of their benevolence which was always done without ostentation and from the purest motives; they searched out the widow and orphan, and protected them; and who have walked in the way of holiness all their lives.'

'The contemplation of their reward inspired me with an exalted sense of their happiness, and I said to myself, here I will remain; but Serosh izad... impelled me forward when I saw another vast concourse of people, clothed in robes of diverse colors, which appeared to me as garments of light;



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they were seated on thrones, and their countenances threw out radiances as brilliant as the sun and moon. They were conversing together in tones of complacency and gladness... Serosh izad (explained), 'They are the souls of those who have preserved the sacred fire and water in all its purity; and who have never omitted the prayers at the appointed times; and who have practiced the exercise of the five senses in the best and purest manner. This is the place appointed for them in Aser Roshni'...

"We then journeyed onwards, and came to another place where a vast number of souls were collected, who were arrayed in new vestments of the purest white, and adorned with pearls and jewels of high price; they were walking around on the fields of ether, and their countenances portrayed an effulgence of light which showed the state of happiness and bliss they enjoyed... Serosh izad (explained), 'These are the souls of good princes and legislators who have governed well, and who have studied the good and the real interests and welfare of their subjects; who have protected the poor, promoted and rewarded the deserving, and punished the oppressor with the utmost rigor; who performed good works, and protected the priests, and observed all the rites of the Masdian faith'...

"I was then impelled forward and came to another place where a great multitude of souls were assembled; they were all seated on thrones and supported by pillows; the thrones were surrounded by angels, and the splendor of the place was very great... Serosh izad (explained)... 'These are the souls of good priests, governors, and of those employed in the duties of religion. They are under my particular charge and I delight in ministering to them; but I am the enemy of all those who neglect those duties'...

"I... (next) came to a place that was wholly inhabited by the souls of women, who were all clothed in embroidered garments, and adorned with pearls, diamonds and all kinds of precious stones; on their heads were placed crowns of gold, and their countenance was illumined with gladness, and they were amusing themselves by walking about, and conversing in the most playful manner... Serosh izad (explained), 'Those souls that you see here are those of good women; those who were faithful to their husbands during their lives, and who never departed from virtue either in thought or act, and who were contented in the station allotted to them; and performed all the duties prescribed by the Masdian religion. This is the reward that God has appointed for them, the station to which Omnipotence has allotted them'...

"I then journeyed forwards, accompanied by Serosh izad and Ardebehest um Shasfund, and saw in another place a great number of souls assembled, whose countenance vied in splendor with the sun and moon; they were clothed in garments of gold and silver, and surrounded with warlike instruments of all descriptions, formed of gold and silver, and other costly materials, with which they were amusing themselves, as they had been used to do in the lower world. I was (told)... 'Those are the souls of departed heroes and warriors, who, though they have destroyed and conquered many people, yet did nothing wantonly or cruelly, or imagined any wickedness; and who always protected the widow and orphan, and succored the poor and distressed. For those good actions God has rewarded them in this distinguished manner.'

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Zoroaster's journey to heaven

"I then... came to another place, where a large concourse of souls were collected. The place appeared like a spacious garden, planted with trees and shrubs of various kinds, and rivulets and clear springs running between them; the trees were filled with singing birds who rent the air with their melodious notes, and the springs sent out the scent of roses, the bottoms of which were studded with the most precious gems over which glided fish of gold and silver hues; the garden itself was filled with groups of musicians, who made the air resound with their sprightly notes, to which others danced, and the whole scene spoke the utmost enjoyment. I (learnt)... 'They are those who made it their business in the lower world to kill and destroy all manner of noxious animals, reptiles and insects that are inimical to man for which this is the reward'...

"We then... came to another place, that appeared to be clothed in eternal verdure. Its beautiful appearance gave to my thoughts a wonderful degree of complacency and gratitude to God for all his goodness. Here the Rehan was conspicuous, yielding the most odoriferous fragrance; the lime tree, and the orange also, shed their odors around; here, under the shade of lofty trees, were seated a vast concourse of people, who were ministered to and attended by the most beautiful females, who were arrayed in costly habits of gold and silver, with crowns of gold on their heads; bands of musicians also sounded their various instruments, and every thing around had the appearance of joy and gladness... Serosh izad (related)... 'These are the poor and humble, the husbandman and the peasant, who have followed the true way, fulfilled the duties allotted to them with activity and zeal, and have walked in the ways of righteousness all the days that

they sojourned in the lower world; over whom presides the angel Eshendar Mud um Shasfund, by whose order the female angels are ministering to them'...

"I then... came to another place where a great concourse of people were assembled, all of whom were seated on separate thrones, adorned with gold and silver, which gave them the appearance of so many kings, with their several suites and attendants, all of whom were differently habited in garments of rich stuffs, ornamented with gold, silver and precious stones. Beside them severally stood a horse ready caparisoned, with gold bridle and stirrups, and otherwise adorned with costly trappings... Serosh izad (conveyed), 'Those are the souls of herdsmen, shepherds and others that were employed in the lower world in the care and superintendence of the several domestic animals; and who performed their duties to them in the most exemplary manner, by ministering kindly to them in their several wants, and by not neglecting them in their old age, or when assailed by sickness; by affording them protection from beasts of prey; by sheltering them from the storms, and shading them from the too powerful rays of the sun; and by giving (in goodwill and without ostentation) their produce, which they did not require themselves, to the poor and needy'...

"After having... explained these things to me, Serosh izad... said, 'Turn your thoughts, oh, Arda Viraf! towards God, and walk upwards three paces;' which having done, I found myself in Ana Gurra Roshna behest, (or the seventh heaven), in the midst of a garden whose gates were of burnished gold, the trees and flowers of which shed such delicious odors as quite bewildered my senses: here were seen the rose, the tulip, the hyacinth, the jasmin, the violet, the narcissus, the centfoil, and many others of great beauty and fragrance. All kinds of fruit were also in the greatest profusion; here were seen the cooling orange, and the luscious grape, the date and pomegranate, and every kind of refreshing fruit and scented flower, distilling such delightful fragrance as baffles further description. The trees were also filled with the most delightful of the feathered race, some with unrivalled plumage, others with the most melodious voices which quite enchanted me and filled my soul with admiration, and my heart with gratitude.

"We then proceeded forward, and I saw a building, that shone like the sun in its fullest radiance, being studded with diamonds, pearls, emeralds, and all the different kinds of precious stones. In the center of the building was a golden throne, surrounded with chairs; on the throne was seated the prophet Zeratush, and by his side were standing his three sons, Assud Avaster, Ozwur toor, and Koorshed chehar; I also saw the soul of Jemshid, attending on the Prophet; also Kai Kobad, Kous Kyarash, Kio murs, Feridoun, Gushtasp, Hooshung, Jemas, Heeruch, Agrarus, Medimah, Zo Timasp, Kerchasp, Ferchotee, Lohrasp, Changragach, Bahman, Darab, Dara and Seeawack. Here I put up a prayer to God, that it might please him to allot me a place amongst those who were so highly distinguished; and I addressed myself to my conductors, and said... 'Here I will remain, and return no more to the world below;' to which Serosh izad replied, 'Oh, Arda Viraf! God, who knows your heart, and the good works you have already wrought, will no doubt destine you to this place, but at present you, oh, Arda Viraf! who are the most favored of mortals, have other duties to fulfil; the king is expecting you, and the fate of a whole nation depends on the

termination of your mission.'

"As Serosh izad spoke these words, a most resplendent light appeared at a little distance from us, and an invisible voice said, in accents of harmony and kindness, 'Let every care be taken of Arda Viraf, and conduct him also to the place of punishments, that he may be enabled to report to the king the nature of them, as well as of the rewards for good works, that the nations may know them, and sin no more.'

"I was then impelled forward by my two conductors, who... gave me much information and good advice. 'Without trouble nothing can be attained,' said Serosh izad; 'the poor day laborer is worthy of his hire, and those who perform good works will have their reward in eternal life, according to their several merits... The life of man is of short duration, and many troubles and anxieties fall to his lot; and a man after 50 years of prosperity and happiness, may be, by some unforeseen accident, reduced to sickness and poverty. Many are tried by this criterion, and but few are found worthy. To suffer a day of pain, after 50 years of pleasure, is too much for them, and they complain, in bitterness of spirit, to the Creator of all good, of his injustice and cruelty, without remembering the good they have so long enjoyed, or calling to mind the eternity of punishment in reserve for the wicked.

"Therefore, oh, Arda Viraf! walk yourself in the paths of righteousness, and teach others also to do so. Recollect that your body will return to dust, but that your soul, if rich in good works, will mount to immortality, and partake of the happiness you have already witnessed. Take less care of your body, and more of your soul; the pains and aches of the body are easily cured, but who can minister to the diseases of the soul? When you set out on a journey in the lower world you provide yourselves, and take with you money, clothes, provisions, and are prepared against all the exigencies of the road, but what do you provide yourselves with for your last journey, for the journey of the soul from the lower to the upper world; and whose friendship have you to assist you on the way?

"In the first place, the friend who will assist you is God; but to attain his friendship you must walk in his ways, and place in him the firmest reliance. The provisions must be faith and hope, and the remembrance of your good works. The body, oh, Arda Viraf! may be likened unto a horse, and the soul to its rider, and the provisions requisite for the support of both are good actions; but as with a feeble rider the horse is ill managed, so with a feeble horse the rider is but ill accommodated, care ought to be taken that both are kept in order; so, in a spiritual sense, the soul and body must be kept in order by a succession of good actions. Even in the world the multitude would sneer at a man who took more care of his horse than of himself; for this reason a man ought to take more care of his soul than of his body. God, oh, Arda Viraf! requires only two things of the sons of men; the first, that they should not sin; the next that they should be grateful for the many blessings He is continually bestowing on them.

"Let the world, oh, Arda Viraf! be taught not to set their hearts on the pleasures and vanities of life, as nothing can be carried away with them...

"In youth, and in the prime of manhood, when blessed with health and vigor, you suppose that your strength will never fail; that your riches, your lands, your houses, and your honors will remain for ever; that your gardens will be always green, and your vineyards fruitful; but... teach them not to think so; teach them the danger of such a way of thinking — all, all, will pass away as a dream.

"The flowers fade and give lessons unto man that he is unwilling to profit by — Yea, the world itself will pass away, and nothing will remain but God!

"Therefore, oh, Arda Viraf! turn your thoughts only towards Him... pleasure... has its concomitant pain; roses have thorns, and honors fall into disgrace...

—◆◆◆—
"Those are the souls of departed
heroes and warriors, who, though they
have destroyed and conquered many
people, yet did nothing wantonly or
cruelly, or imagined any wickedness"
—◆◆◆—

Let the avoidance of excess in everything be most particularly inculcated; in wine or women, in eating and drinking; though they bring their own punishment in the world, by the diseases they engender, yet they encourage the most deadly sins, and the soul so indulging will most assuredly be cut off from heaven... the indulgence of our passions brings no pleasure of long duration, or impresses any good sentiments on the heart.

"If after praying to God for offspring, and He has granted your request, into what a sea of trouble and anxiety are you plunged; your son or daughter may grow up in vicious habits, and embitter your days by their undutiful conduct; the one may become a thief, the other a courtesan, and bring disgrace on your old age. The bee that produces honey has also a sting.

"The world is composed of lust, avarice, and of passions the most ungovernable; if God gives them one thing, even that for which they most desire, they are not satisfied, but are continually craving for more and more, to a hundred fold.

"Avarice and ambition deprive them of sleep, and prevent them from making a laudable exertion to subdue these dreadful passions which will plunge them in everlasting misery.

"A king who has conquered all the surrounding countries sighs because he has no more worlds to subdue. Kai Kous, after having conquered many countries, aspired to be a king in heaven and was punished for his presumption by a dreadful fall which made him sensible of his folly.

"So you see, oh, Arda Viraf! that content is the happiest condition of man, and the most pleasing to the Creator; and treasure the advice I have given you; and as you return to the lower world, inculcate these precepts, and abide by the laws and walk in the way of truth and holiness, and continue in the worship of the true God."

"Serosh izad having concluded, we stepped forward, and saw a great concourse of souls assembled, all of whom were clothed in flowing garments of white, adorned with embroidery of gold and silver, and the angels Aban izad, and Adur izad, and Murdad um Shasfund (the angel of death) standing near them. The assemblage of souls that I saw in this place

were all seated on thrones supported by cushions, and the place itself was filled with odors of musk and amber; they were enjoying themselves in conversation on the most pleasing subjects, and contentment and resignation beamed from their countenances, and the angels before mentioned were ministering to them. I (learnt)... 'Those are the souls of those governors who have been unremitting in their desire to do good, and to perform good actions; those who have dug wells, canals and built aqueducts; and who erected caravanserais and resting places for the wearied traveler; laid out gardens for the comfort of the poor, and not wantonly destroyed trees and plants; and have preserved with care the sacred fire, and performed the duties of religion with cheerfulness, attending to the doctrines of our Prophet Zeratush and respecting him as the servant of the Most High.

"From thence I proceeded forward with my two conductors, and came to another place, where we saw a vast multitude of souls collected whose beautiful countenances emitted the most brilliant rays, each of them appearing like a sun in the firmament; their clothing also appeared as if of light. They flitted about on the light ether, and had the appearance of youths of 15 years of age, their countenances portraying all the innocence and playfulness of that age. Above were seen ranges of apartments destined for them, glittering with light and splendor, which delighted the heart, and filled my mind with gratitude...

"Serosh izad (said)... 'These (are) the souls of those who exerted themselves in the cause of the poor and of the distressed, of the widow and the orphan. Here they live in perpetual youth, as their virtues, never to be forgotten, are stamped on the memory...'

"Arda Viraf now being told by his conductors that he had seen all the secrets of heaven, exclaimed, 'How I am delighted with what I have seen, and with the favor that has been shown me! How can I show my gratitude to the Most High, (for enabling me to perform this arduous embassy), than by promising to walk in the ways of truth and holiness all my days!'

"Serosh izad and Ardebehest um Shasfund now desired me to prepare myself to see the punishments that were inflicted on the wicked, and taking hold of my arm, impelled me downwards, and we presently came to a river of fetid water, that emitted the most pestilential vapors (my conductors told me that it was of the depth of nine fathoms), and on it floated a vast number of souls, in all the agony of drowning, many of them sinking, and all of them in the greatest agitation, calling on God, and complaining of their lot; but all was lost in the winds, nobody heard them, or paid attention to their complaints: no person came to their assistance, all their cries were unavailing. All kinds of noxious reptiles, with which the river abounded, gave them not a moment's respite, and they were carried down the stream, notwithstanding their cries and lamentations. I felt astonished and humbled by this sight, and pity for their sufferings entered into my heart, and I inquired of my conductors who they were that had merited so severe a punishment, and what was the name of the river; to which Serosh izad replied, 'The river

that you see before you is composed of the tears of mankind; tears shed (against the express command of the Almighty) for the departed; therefore, when you return again to the earth, inculcate this to mankind — that to grieve immoderately for the departed is, in the sight of God, a most heinous sin; and the river is constantly increased by this folly, every tear making the poor wretches who float on it more distant from ease and relief.

"To pray for the souls of the deceased is a duty we owe them and is pleasing to God, but to cry and mourn is sinful in His sight.

Hope is not denied to the children of men, and faith in the justice of the Almighty ought to banish regret.'

Serosh izad here paused, and I was taken by my two conductors to the foot of Chunwat Phool, and my sight being directed to the dark side of the bridge, I perceived a soul that had escaped from its earthly tenement, and was seated at the bed's head of the deceased. It complained, in the most piteous accents, of its forlorn state; 'Where shall I go?

Who will receive me? Even when confined in my narrow case on earth, I was never in such a pitiful dilemma! Here I am tormented by all manner of demons, who have attempted to take me to hell, even before the days of my probation are ended! After having finished these exclamations, I saw it creep along in fear, trembling, and presently a wind came sweeping along, loaded with the most pestilential vapors, even as it were from the boundaries of hell; at which all the souls who were near fled with the utmost expedition.

"In the midst of this wind appeared a form of the most demonical appearance; it had teeth like an elephant, and the nails of its hands and feet were like the talons of an eagle; his eyes were like blood, and out of his mouth issued volumes of pestilential vapor that mixed with the wind. When this demon was seen by the soul before mentioned, it endeavored to make its escape, but was arrested by a voice of thunder that said, 'Dare not to attempt to fly from me, for I have you in my clutches.'

"The soul then inquired of the demon, in imploring accents, 'Who are you that appear in such a monstrous shape? I never saw anything so horrible in the lower world.' To which the demon replied, 'I am your genius, and have become thus deformed by your crimes (whilst you were innocent I was handsome). Whilst others have walked in the way of truth, you have laid in no provisions for this long journey; you are come quite unprovided; you were rich, but you did no good with your riches, you neither relieved the poor or protected the widow or orphan; and not only did no good yourself, but prevented, by your evil example, those whose inclinations led them to do good; and you have often mentally said, 'When is the day of judgment? To me it will never arrive.' Such is the opinion of the foolish and unbelieving, but a dreadful retribution awaits them. As for yourself, your riches will soon be dissipated; you have brought none away with you, and instead of blessing your memory, posterity all join in despising it. Such is the end of the evil doer; and now you are in my power.' Having said this, the demon laid hold of him by the neck, and brought him to the foot of Chunwat Phool, which, instead of the broad expanse it

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that your body
will return to dust,
but that your soul,
if rich in good
works, will mount
to immortality"**

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"We presently came to a river of fetid water that emitted the most pestilential vapors and on it floated a vast number of souls, in all the agony of drowning, many of them sinking, and all of them in the greatest agitation"

presents to the good, was now as the edge of a sword. The soul hesitated to venture on it, but was impelled by the demon, and after tottering a few paces fell, and was precipitated into the abyss below.

"The heart of Arda Viraf overflowed with compassion at the lot of this unfortunate, but he was not suffered long to remain, but was hurried forward by his conductors, and entered a region where the cold was excessive, and the air loaded with fetid vapors, and surrounded with a very great darkness; a passage appeared before us of such straightness as scarce to admit the passing of one person at a time, and from hence issued a smoke, that added to the darkness. Our progress was here arrested, and I with difficulty perceived, through the darkness, a vast concourse of souls, each of whom appeared crouching in a separate corner, and believing that they were quite alone, and saying to themselves, 'Here I am, the only unfortunate, the only unworthy.' I perceived that they were tormented by all kinds of noxious animals — serpents, scorpions, and all kinds of reptiles surrounded them, and gave them not a moment's respite from their sufferings. Nothing human remained but their visage, which was also distorted by pain and grief... Serosh izad (said), 'They are those who were guilty of unnatural crimes that degraded them from the state of humanity to be worse than the lowest reptile. This is the punishment assigned to them, which will last to all eternity'...

"I then... saw the soul of a woman, surrounded by devils, one of whom was administering to her a cup of the most detestable compounds, composed of blood and other impure substances, whilst the surrounding devils compelled her to drink, by threats and blows; as soon as one was finished another was presented, which, amidst her cries and lamentations, and the most piteous entreaties, she was made to swallow.

"I (learnt)... 'This woman, when in the world, was impure and unclean, and took no care of sacred things; and in the time of her impurity did not refrain from conversation with men, nor from touching sacred things. Such, oh, Arda Viraf! is the punishment inflicted for such crimes.'

(According to the narration male sinners who delighted in conversing with females during the time of their impurity met a similar fate.)

"We then proceeded forward, and came to another place, where I saw a man hanging by one leg on a tree, and surrounded by devils, who, with long knives, were fleaing him alive. He was writhing in the greatest agony, entreating for mercy, and uttering the most dreadful cries... Serosh izad (related), 'This man, during his sojourn on earth, persecuted the worshippers of God, butchering and destroying them whenever they came in his power'...

"I... soon came to another place, where a man stood... exclaiming, in the most piteous accents, 'I die of hunger! A bit of bread, a draught of water, or I perish!' At intervals he

bit pieces out of his own arms, which he eagerly swallowed... Serosh izad (mentioned), 'This man is an ungrateful mortal who partook of the good things of the lower world, without either returning thanks or imploring a blessing, or giving of his superfluity to the poor.'

"I... then saw a woman suspended by her two breasts, surrounded by devils, and all kinds of the most loathsome reptiles who were biting her and tormenting her on all sides whilst she uttered the most dreadful cries and entreaties. Serosh izad (related), 'This woman was unfaithful to her husband, and deserted him for other men'...

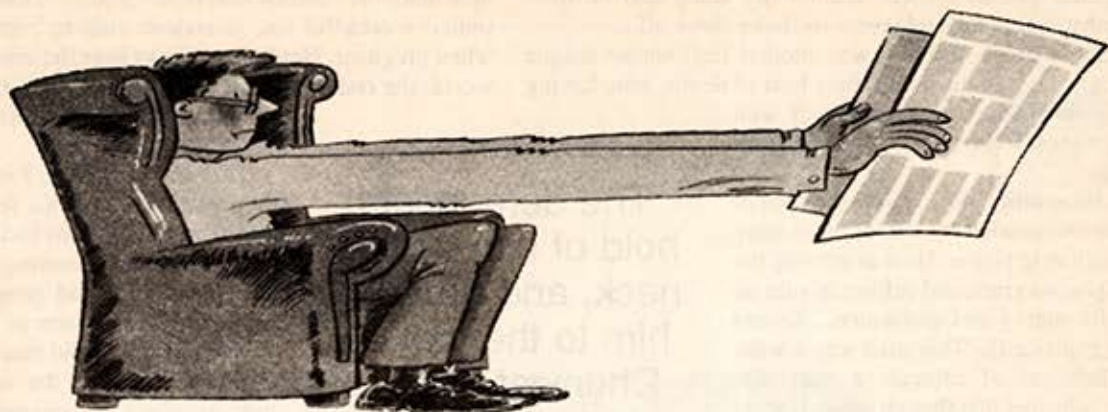
"We then... came to a place where a vast multitude of souls were collected, in the midst of whom were all kinds of reptiles and noxious animals, who constantly assailed them with their teeth and their stings... They were uttering the most dreadful and appalling cries. Serosh izad (explained)... 'Those people neglected, in the lower world, to wear the sadra and the koostee, as prescribed by the laws of the Magi; and also from wearing covering for the feet; and who performed the natural evacuations without regard to cleanliness, or covering the head and body'...

"I (next) saw a woman suspended by the heels, and having her tongue protruded out of the back of her neck. She was bewailing her hard lot, and repeating, in a quick tone, 'There can be no punishment so hard as mine'... Serosh izad... (informed me)... 'This woman was in constant rebellion against her husband; she heeded him not, and did all in her power to make him unhappy; forgetting that, next to God and the prophets, she ought to have revered him'...

"From hence we proceeded forward... and saw a man surrounded with devils, who were urging him to drink the most detestable of beverages, out of a measure; and when he drew back he was pushed forward again with stripes, blows, and reproaches, and made to drink of the nauseous draught... Serosh izad (mentioned)... 'This man, whilst in the lower world, used false weights and measures, thereby injuring the poor; who adulterated his goods... amassing wealth by these injurious practices. He is now punished, by being made to drink nauseous compounds out of his own measure'... I (then) saw a man surrounded by 70 devils, who were tossing him about and flogging him with snakes, which they held in their hands; the snakes also fixing their fangs in his flesh at every stroke; his hands and feet were manacled, and he rent the air with his cries and lamentations, but in vain. I... was informed by Serosh izad that he was a tyrant, who abused the authority delegated to him by God, by persecuting his subjects, and rendering them unhappy, by killing them, by imposing unjust fines, and by imprisoning them without cause, and by treating them on all occasions with the utmost rigor, neither attending to their petitions, or relieving their distress.

"A man who was a great sinner, a fomentor of disputes, a liar, a slanderer, and of the most evil disposition (was

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punished such that) his tongue protruded out of his mouth... covered with all kinds of noxious insects such as scorpions, centipedes and so on who continually stung and bit him, notwithstanding his endeavors to shake them off...

"(Some paces further... was another liar) whose tongue was pulled out of his mouth by a host of devils, who having laid it on a stone, were beating it with other stones, amidst his groans and complaints.

"(At) another place, I saw the soul of a man surrounded by devils, who were cutting him in pieces. He was uttering the most piteous cries, and calling in vain on God for mercy and assistance... Serosh izad (explained), 'This man was a wanton destroyer of animals; a man who never reflected that though animals were given by God for the use of man, yet he was not permitted to kill or torture them wantonly'...

"I saw a man surrounded by a vast number of dogs, who were tearing him limb from limb, amidst his resistance, his cries and lamentations. 'This man was a wanton destroyer of these animals, in his lifetime... These animals are the best friends of man, and to protect them is of all things the most pleasing in the sight of God,' (I learnt).

"We then saw a man tied hand and foot, and pressed together as if in a press; thousands of devils stood near him who were inflicting on him a variety of tortures in spite of his cries and entreaties... Serosh izad (said), 'This man was a miser of so avaricious a spirit that he buried his riches and had no pleasure but in their contemplation; he benefited no one, nor did he enjoy them himself; the meaning of benevolence he did not understand, nor did he give alms or perform the duties prescribed by the Masdian religion to either God or man. Riches was the deity he adored; but he brought nothing away with him, all was left behind, and his descendants are now dissipating the wealth he left them, without one particle of respect or reverence for his memory'...

"(At) another place I saw a man, the whole of whose body, except one of his feet, was plunged into hell, and was tortured by every species of loathsome reptiles... for his total negligence in performing the moral duties; an idle, indolent sluggard, who found trouble in the most common and necessary duties of life, and never performed any of them without repining, and ill temper. His foot (was) exempted (from the general punishment inflicted on the other parts of his body) for having once in his life performed a good action with it. As this man was one day walking in the fields, he perceived a sheep tied to a tree, bleating in a piteous manner; he approached, and found that its cries were because its food was placed out of its reach; impelled by a sentiment of pity he kicked the straw within its reach... This shows to you the goodness of God who lets not the smallest good action go without its reward. This ought to act as an incentive to the sons of men to perform only good actions.

"(At) another place, I saw a woman, to whose breasts were affixed large stones, which she was compelled to draw forwards; mill-stones were also placed on her bosom, by

which she was put to the utmost torture; and she performed her task amidst sighs, tears, and the most heart-rending lamentations... Serosh izad (conveyed)... 'This woman committed a dreadful sin, in endeavoring to procure abortion, when pregnant. Not being able to bear the contumely of the world, she endeavored to conceal her shame, by committing this most dreadful crime against her Maker...

"(At) another place, I saw a man, on whom the most noxious reptiles and insects of all descriptions had affixed themselves, and were gnawing his vitals, in spite of his cries and groans. I (learnt), 'This man was a bearer of false witness, by which means he did much injury to the poor, and distressed the widow and orphan; by which he became possessed of much ill-gotten wealth, which he, however, never enjoyed, and now has left behind.

"(At) another place, I saw a man surrounded by a host of devils, who were administering to him the most nauseous draughts and substances such as carrion, garbage, gore, and such like, in spite of his cries and resistance. Serosh izad (said)... 'This man was an unlawful fore-staller and regrater, and delighted in distressing the poor, and obtained great riches by such unjustifiable means; but he has left all behind him, and has no one to comfort or help him in his tribulation, nor no approving reflection to console him... (A similar punishment was meted out to those who) followed none of the laws respecting the avoidance of impure substances such as dead bodies, blood, hair, and so on... (and those who) hired laborers, and paid them not, but constantly cheated them of their due, applying their wages to his own use, thereby exposing them and their families to the utmost distress. This is the punishment awarded to all those who commit such crimes. Let this be known on earth, that the man who cheateth the poor is hateful in the sight of God'...

"(At) another place, I saw a vast multitude of people whose bodies were afflicted with the most direful diseases, the flesh rotting from their bones and full of worms, and their countenances of the most livid aspect... Serosh izad (said)... 'This host is composed of the fraudulent and deceitful; those who delighted in turning men from the right way, either in matters of religion or policy. This is their punishment. Persons who mislead the young, the weak, or the ignorant, deserve it; let it be, therefore oh, Arda Viraf, impressed on your memory, and let it be known to all people'...

"I then... came to another place, where I saw a woman, whom a party of devils were hauling by the hair of the head through a barren tract of snow and ice; she was shivering with cold, and uttering the most piercing cries... Serosh izad (explained), 'This woman did not preserve the sacred fire pure, but defiled it by throwing into it all kinds of impurity through indolence and inattention, often throwing hair and other filth into it'...

"We then... saw at a distance a woman biting and destroying her own flesh... Serosh izad (stated), 'This woman was a sorceress, and a professor of magic, in all its branches which

**"The demon laid
hold of him by the
neck, and brought
him to the foot of
Chunwat Phool,
which, instead of
the broad expanse
it presents to the
good, was now
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"Let them lead such lives that on their deathbeds they may not need repentance; and let them not believe that punishments will be remitted at the intercession of those they leave behind; nor will the prayers of priests avail them"

—

she practiced to the hurt and molestation of the human species: an enemy to God, she walked not in his ways but leagued herself with devils who encouraged her in her diabolical arts...

"(Then) I saw a man with a mountain on his shoulders, and he was impelled forwards, through defiles of ice and snow, by a host of devils who, in reply to his lamentations, gave him blows and reproaches... Serosh izad (said)... 'This man was a fornicator, a seducer, a follower of the vilest propensities; no woman was secure from his unlawful lusts... Do not forget to admonish and teach mankind how pleasing the virtues of continence and chastity are in the sight of God.'

"(A similar heavy weight had to be borne by the man who) was a rich landholder and possessed of large domains and abundance of wealth, but was not satisfied (and) oppressed his tenants by heavy exactions which they were unable to pay, and otherwise made them so miserable that they left his hands untitled and fled from such persecution... Prosperity... is more difficult to bear with than adversity; the poor man is humble in spirit, and, if content, is highly rewarded; the rich often forget that they are of the same species as themselves, and treat them with contumely, which, if borne meekly, is highly pleasing to God. Let this be known to the world; proclaim to the rich, that the oppressor of the poor is sure of meeting with the punishment he deserves; and teach the poor to live in content and humility, and assure them of a splendid reward'...

"Proceeding forward, I (reached) another place, and saw a host of souls, who were buried up to their necks in snow, each of whom were attended by a devil, who was administering to them severally an impure cup of blood and filth... Serosh izad (revealed)... 'These are men of impure minds, whose wicked thoughts did not allow them to attend to the laws respecting cleanliness of person; and who particularly offended in the article of bathing, using water that was rendered impure by some person having before bathed in it, thereby contracting pollution both of body and mind. This punishment is inflicted on them by desire of Spendermud um Shasfun, and the other angels who preside over fire and waters, who were offended by their impurity... Cleanliness of person leads to purity of mind — the one cannot exist without the other'...

"(At) another place, I saw a man surrounded with a host of devils who were flogging him with whips made of snakes, and forcing him to rake up stones with his nails out of a quarry, without paying any attention to his lamentations and entreaties for mercy... Serosh izad (stated), 'This man possessed himself of his neighbor's land, under false pretences, and has left it to his son; and as long as it remains in his family, so long will this punishment endure...'

"I then... saw the soul of a man surrounded with a host of devils, who were tearing his flesh from the bones with iron combs, and dancing and exulting in his pains, and laughing

at his lamentations. (I learnt)... 'This man always broke his word, and never performed his agreements, making a laughing stock of those who did. This is the punishment awarded for those who break their faith with friend or foe...'

"(At) another place, I saw a multitude of people surrounded by a legion of demons who were tormenting them in various ways; some were pelting them with stones, and some wounding them with arrows... Serosh izad (related)... 'Those souls that are thus punished were people who, though they kept their words, and rigorously performed their agreements with those of their own sect and faith, yet held it no sin to break their faith with those of a different persuasion...'

"We then retired from this place; and I was conducted from this narrow entrance, and visible darkness, to a clear space in Geroos man, and to the presence of God. The splendor of light here emitted quite overpowered and confused me, and I was unable to offer up my prayers and adorations; my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and my knees trembled, in spite of the assurances given by my conductors that there was nothing to fear. A voice now proceeded from the midst of the light, which, addressing me, (in the mildest accents, restored me to confidence, and enabled me to contemplate the goodness of God, and to adore in silence), said, 'Oh, Arda Viraf! you may now return; the people are in trouble on your account; for these seven days and nights they have been watching, and have had no rest, and are full of uneasiness for the result of your embassy; and now, oh, Arda Viraf! report to them faithfully what you have seen, and inculcate to posterity the strict observance of the laws; the rewards for their observance, and the punishment for their infringement... I bowed in submission, and looked towards the place from which the voice proceeded, but saw nothing but a redundancy of light. 'The voice again addressed me, saying, 'Oh, Arda Viraf! impress also on the minds of men, that the way of truth is straight and pleasant, but the paths of vice are many. Let the rich also believe in God; let not prosperity turn their minds; let them not put trust in a deathbed repentance; such is of no avail; but if their intentions are pure, let them put faith in God, and look forward to the reward given to all those who walk in His ways, and follow the precepts of Zeratush... without fear or doubt, and preserve the mysteries of the Masdian religion in their hearts, and lead such lives that on their deathbeds they may not need repentance; and let them not believe that punishments will be remitted at the intercession of those they leave behind; nor will the prayers of priests avail them; as they sow so they will reap; neither reward nor punishment will be omitted. Proclaim this to the world, and let the dreams of carelessness and negligence be banished for ever... 'Let envy, covetousness, anger, hatred, and lying be also banished from the earth.'

"Serosh izad then... said... 'Oh, Arda Viraf, let the truths you have this day heard be impressed on your memory, and

relate what you have seen faithfully, and make a full report to the world, so that no imputation may remain with you, nor any false interpretation be suspected'...

"Serosh izad now conducted me to the lower heaven, where I met many spirits who came to visit me: some of them addressed me, and said, 'Oh, Arda Viraf! when you revisit the earth, let our families know the way of truth; let them avoid sin, and think of the last day; let them avoid the temptations of the flesh and of the devil, and follow the precepts of our holy religion; for if they follow the devil to sin, hell will be their portion.' Having promised to perform all they required, I was conducted by Serosh izad to Mah pia behest, where we also met a number of souls; some of whom... thus addressed me: 'Oh, Arda Viraf! report to our families the necessity of good works; and teach them to prefer the joys of heaven to those of the lower world; those of heaven are eternal and never ceasing, whilst those of the lower world are fleeting, and pass away as a dream..."

"(At) Sitar pia behest, (I) was again met by a large concourse of souls, many of whom approached me, and said, 'Oh, Arda Viraf! inculcate to our families the necessity of prayer, and the use of the Yesht and Izzushue. Let the Kooste be also kept pure, and free from uncleanness; if we had followed those precepts, we should have been translated to the upper heavens, but we neglected those duties, and are doomed to remain here.'

Having heard their request, and promised to fulfil their injunctions, we proceeded downwards, and came near the Chunwat Phool, where I was again surrounded by a multitude of souls, some of whom had been slanderers and evil doers, others adulterers, and many who had died without heirs, either natural or adopted. Many of these addressed me, and said, 'Oh, Arda Viraf! remember this our advice — let no one die without heirs, in default of natural ones, it is a good action to adopt them; for want of heirs, to hand our name to posterity, we cannot pass the bridge, but wander up and down in an uncomfortable manner, without enjoyment. Let this be known, that men may err no more in this manner. We are in sight of heaven, a river flows before us, yet we die of thirst, for the obtaining of these things are denied us. Report to our families, oh, Arda Viraf! our miserable situation, that sons may be adopted in our names, that we may be enabled to pass the bridge; and let it be known, that to hand our names to posterity is one of the highest duties we owe our Creator.'

"Having promised to fulfil their request, they took leave, and the slanderers approached me, and said, 'Oh, Arda Viraf! acquaint the world with our miserable situation, and let them avoid the punishment allotted to us, by walking in the ways of truth, and avoiding all disputes and slanderous imputations, shunning the crimes of adultery and fornication, which we have been guilty of, and for which we are doomed to wander near the bridge, until the arrival of those against whom we have sinned. If they admit our pleadings, and forgive us, God will also extend his mercy, and admit us into his holy place; but if those against whom we have offended do not forgive us, here we must continue to wander, and linger on in this state of shame and anguish for ever and ever'...

**"You have also
escaped from
the lower world that
abounds with sin
and pain, and have
come to these
happier regions
where the voice of
joy and gladness is
only heard"**

"Serosh izad and Ardebehest um Shasfund now took their leave of me, after having again repeated their former advice; and as they ascended to the holy regions I awoke, and found myself on my couch... therefore, oh, men! walk in the ways of righteousness, and avoid the commission of sin: let the rich and powerful set a good example to the poor, and let peace and happiness again visit the earth; let parents set good examples to their children, and masters to their servants."

The king being much pleased with the narration of Arda Viraf, and placing implicit confidence in it, ordered it to be promulgated throughout the empire; and having rewarded the good priest, by showering on him all kinds of favors, and giving him a place of honor, he ordered the relation to be written in letters of gold, and placed in the archives of the empire.

The king further directed the observance of these precepts, and made known, that in the failure of their non-observance, punishment awaited: and for their more speedy promulgation, the king ordered the priests to disperse themselves throughout the empire, to instruct the people in the ways of holiness, and in the laws of the prophet Zeratush, and in their confirmation, as brought down by the holy man Arda Viraf. By these means heresy and schism were banished, the empire was restored to tranquility, and remained so for many years.

After the demise of Ardeshir Babagan, who was succeeded by his son Shapoor, a schism, however, took place, and more than 40,000 people withdrew from the belief placed in the relation of Arda Viraf; when one day, Aderbad maen Asfund, a priest and holy man in great repute, presented himself, and was admitted into the presence of Shapoor, and after the customary obeisances, addressed the king in these words: "The revelations of Arda Viraf, oh, king! which have been so long received as comfortable truths, are now about to be doubted; a schism has arisen in our state that threatens the subversion of the Masdian religion; more than 40,000 souls have seceded from our holy faith. But in order to convince these deluded people of the truth of the revelations handed down to us by Arda Viraf, and promulgated throughout this vast empire by your worthy father, let, oh king! a cauldron of boiling tin be prepared, into which I will precipitate myself; when, if I escape unhurt, the probity of Arda Viraf will be confirmed, and the laws of Zeratush be established on a firmer basis; but if I perish, the revelations may be deemed false, and I shall be punished for my presumption."

The king having with much difficulty assented to the proposition made by Aderbad, ordered the cauldron to be prepared in the most public place of the city; and Aderbad having gone through this cruel, though self proposed ordeal, in the presence of an immense multitude assembled to witness it, and having come out unhurt, the Masdian religion was declared to be that of the nation, and became firmer established than ever, and continued in all its purity until the Mahomedan conquest dispersed its votaries, and forced those who persevered in it to abandon the tombs of their ancestors, and fly for refuge to distant countries...



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