

Zarathushtrian Religion, Philosophy and History

An Interview with

Professor K.D. Irani

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Zarathushtrian Assembly

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Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani is a retired Professor Emeritus of Philosophy from City College of New York. At City College of New York, he taught philosophy for 41 years and also served as the chairman of the Department of Philosophy for nine years. In 1999, he was singularly honored by the establishment of the K.D. Irani chair of Philosophy, at the City College of New York.

He has served as Director of the Academy of Sciences and Humanities at City University of New York. He is also a member of the Academy of Science in New York, the American Philosophical Association, the Philosophy of Science Association, and the American Academy of Religion. He has lectured in his field at University of California, Los Angeles, the Universities of Michigan, London, Gottingen, Vienna, and Rome.

Interviewer: Mr. Shahrooz Ash

Hello, my name is Shahrooz Ash, and I am going to conduct an interview today with Professor Kaikhosrov Irani from City University in New York. He is a professor of ancient philosophy, and it is a great pleasure and honor to have him here today and to be able to do an interview with him.

We have individuals who have translated the Gathas but yet their profession is translation and they have lacked philosophical knowledge and understanding. It is like me translating an economic document but there are certain terms in there; interest rates, supply and demand. But yet I'm not an economist to understand it, so my job is to really translate and then we send that translation to the economic department of let's say a university and they're the experts to comprehend it. So isn't the best source of understanding Zarathushtra's message for most part, is to refer to philosophers who have studied it as opposed to translators.

Professor Irani:

You are so right. There will be people who would resist your suggestion but undoubtedly it is a philosophic doctrine, and it needs very subtle interpretations and some of the linguists are able to offer visions at least partly of valuable, but the general conception has to be reconstructed by appropriate philosophic analysis and if you'd like me to do that, I will give you my reconstruction.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Please do so.

Good And Evil.

Zarathushtra offers a view of the world in terms of certain abstract concepts, which as was traditional in those days throughout the world. The religious poetry personalized abstract concepts, and he does that. The creation that Ahura-Mazda thought of; it was in his mind, and he articulated it and made it an ideal creation - not material, but ideal. Now that is called *Asha*. Literally, that word means truth but the notion of truth here is a very special one. Truth really means, the totality of the vision of ideal existence. It doesn't mean in our ordinary sense the truth or falsity of a statement. The truth that he is talking about is the relationship of all things in perfect harmony so that nothing occurs at the expense of something else. There is no friction in that existence. This ideal world of Zarathushtra, *Asha*, was then actualized in the material world.

Ahura Mazda in his wisdom conceived of a perfect existence in purely ideal terms; and this is what is called *Asha* - the truth. So, truth then means an ideal form of existence where nothing is in conflict or in abrasion with anything else. It is also the notion of social justice. No one prospers at the cost of somebody's injury. Now, this ideal conception exists in an ideal world - what we might call the mental world. The term is *Mainyu*, which exactly this word is the source of the word in English, we have "mind". Now, this ideal conception Ahura Mazda then created into a material world. This is called the *gaethya* world.

The ideal world was supposed to be materialized, actualized in matter. There would be of course: material objects, physical objects, there would be animal life, there would be human life, and so on; and it was supposed to be evolved according to *Asha* – to a state of total perfection. However, and here it comes the essential dualist doctrine of Zarathushtra, within this material world there is also the possibility that *Asha* may not be actualized. Indeed, Zarathushtra says there are two forces, I use the term vectors, but often the term spirit is used, but we should not transform these into personalities. There is the spirit which promotes *Asha* and there is the spirit which opposes/frustrates *Asha*, and this is the dualism between good and evil. The universe is to be understood as a potentially ideal evolution which has been contaminated by internal opposition and frustration. The world is to be looked at as a moral reality, in which there is the movement towards goodness but there is also the movement towards frustration. Now,

this vision is the central religious vision of Zarathushtra. Anyone that does not accept that; one cannot except the faith of Zarathustra.

Now, what is the individual to do? Here come the different abstractions of Zarathushtra. Each individual is gifted with the Good Mind (*Vohu-Mana*). It is not just the mind which enables us to work out mathematical problems or something like that, but the mind which is capable of grasping the moral nature of things. When you see something occurring in your society, you recognize that this much is fair, and this is unfair. As one of the later Priests said, "It is not conceivable that a human being can look at the face of injustice and not recognize it". So, we recognize it. When we recognize it, then we should articulate it and commit ourselves to improvement. We discuss it with people whose lives will be affected, we formulate a way of actualizing the good, to whatever extent we can, and then we do it. And this is repeated in a phrase that comes in prayers all over. It's called the practice of good thought, good word, and good deed. You see there's no such thing as a good deed without good thought. Because in the tradition of Zarathushtra there are no prescriptions; do this, don't do that, and so on. You are left to think through; what should be done. The responsibility is yours. This acceptance of this responsibility becomes the way of life. And you have the view of the world. The world is a moral reality, your way of life. Act with good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. And you have accepted the doctrine of Zarathushtra.

The First Enlightenment.

Now, the interesting thing here is, contrary to the tribal notion, this is a decision to accept this way of life, this vision and this way of life. It's a purely individual matter. In one of the verses of the Gathas, Zarathushtra says, I talk to each of you, listen with care and with careful thought and make a judgment, each individual by individual, man, and woman.

Why does he say this? He distinguishes it from the tribal conception, where each individual didn't think for himself or herself. The tribe made the decisions. If you were a member of the tribe that's what you did. But here each one is asked to make the decision and each one is asked to bear the responsibility for that decision. You choose to live in this way, or you don't. And thus, what we have is a shift from the tribal to the individual. Which has sometimes been called; The First Enlightenment, and recognition

that you have to take the responsibility for what you do. And this is at the heart of it. It must have been a very strikingly different teaching. To us, it appears rationally clear. But, in a tribal society, this appears strange.

Freewill.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Before Zarathushtra, humans had a deterministic view of the world. They thought that each person had their destiny preset and their future was predetermined. And it seems after his arrival we started gathering the notion that we are in control of our future, that we are free and that we can shape the future according to our own will.

Professor Irani:

In the Gathas, there are two places where he talks about our making responsible decisions freely. In one case he says that ‘Ahura Mazda made us such that he gave us this privilege of thinking, deciding and being responsible for the decision.’ But the individual’s existence was so caught up with the notion of tribal existence; that there was really no individuality. Everything was done in the tribe. The tribe controlled the families, the families controlled the individuals, and you see tribal life today in certain regions.

Heaven and Hell.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

We have the idea of *Asha* and its opposite which is *Druj*. And then we have the idea of free will, so there’s this right and wrong ideal situation and we freely choose one of these. And then you have reward and punishment which is the consequence of the choice. And based on the reward and punishment we judge the outcomes, I like this outcome, or not this outcome, so we are constantly judging our actions based on whether I desire the outcome or not. And I guess that will ultimately lead to what people have become to understand as a final judgment. How did I conduct my life? Accumulating adding all of these rights and wrongs and going to immortality. This is I guess how we get the idea of

the notion of heaven and hell. What is this idea of the final judgment? Is this judgment something we render upon ourselves? Do we judge ourselves at the end or is there some deity that judges?

Professor Irani:

Let me develop this notion right from the start. We human individuals look at various circumstances of our lives and make decisions. We see alternatives of action and we choose one. How this choice is made is an important thing. Is it made with the good mind, with good intentions, with good thought? Now, what does this good thought mean? That you recognize a situation, you see that in some way it is flawed. You notice that it is flawed because it is in some way distinct from what it ideally should be. With your good mind (*Vohu-Mana*), is capable of seeing. Then that should be the only reason, that is called righteousness; to do the right thing merely because it is right, and that is a very famous prayer which everyone recites (*Ashem-Vohu*). That will give me ultimately my satisfaction; to do the right thing because it is right.

What is evil? Evil is that intention which violates that, which gets you to do something for some reason other than what is right; some self-promotion or something else. One of the priests of the later Sasanian period said that “all our thoughts if they are kept pure, will tell us what the right thing is.”

“Then why don't we do it,” his son asked the high priest, but why don't we do this. And the high priest says, “because our mind is clouded; it is clouded by mainly two forces, greed and fear.”

When these move us, then we look for self-interest; we put that above the interest of the right and fail to act correctly. Well in that case we have failed in our responsibility. All these acts of doing the right thing for the right reason, doing the right thing for some act out of some accidental judgment, doing the wrong thing for the wrong reason or doing the wrong thing accidentally, and so on. All this, is so to speak, is collected in a book of accounts and when the soul goes to the other side of the gates of death, and now we come to a kind of dramatic vision. It comes to the bridge of the separator, and now on this bridge, its accounts, all the good is put on one side and all the evil and opportunities for good that were lost are put on the other side, if the good outweighs the evil you cross the bridge into the state of best consciousness. If not, you fall off the bridge into the states of

worse consciousness. These became Heaven and Hell later on. These are states of consciousness of our spirit. These are not halls where we live in comfort and so on. That's a highly materialist conception of Heaven and Hell. But the conception that there are two different ends for differently valued souls is part of the doctrine, and this, you don't appeal for mercy, you don't plead for this or that. It is the consequence of your life; the moral consequence of your life appears in the state that you go into after you die.

Satan.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Going back to this idea of heaven and hell, we later on develop the idea of Satan or the devil character so to say. In Zoroastrianism, as you mentioned, we have this *Spenta Mainyu* and the *Angra Mainyu*; the evil spirit and the holy spirit, or evil mentality or good mentality. Is the Satan a personification of this *Angra Mainyu* or the unholy spirit?

Professor Irani:

Yes. You see, what happens in every religion, in every teaching, of the initial prophet, there is a spiritual message. Gradually the spiritual message is promulgated to the people by the priesthood, and the priesthood requires the people to do this and that and so on, rituals of various kinds. And the message is mythologically degraded into standard stories of divine forces which look human. We already had standard Greek mythology, standard Babylonian mythology and standard Egyptian mythology. But with these reflective religions like Zoroastrianism (the teaching of Zarathustra), or the Upanishadic religion which come at the end of the Vedas, or the certain prophetic prescriptions in the Old Testament of the book of Isaiah, for example; where you have abstract commitments which are demanded of the religious person, But the priesthood gradually humanizes them, now you do this, you pray to so- and- so, you do this-and-that and there is a ritual.

And as (Gilbert) Baumslag once said, the priests have to construct rituals because they are by profession technologists. There is a technique of communicating with the divinity.

And one day I was in a discussion, someone asked me, "what do you need this technique for?"

And, I said, “this is a technique for getting into the good graces of the divinity, asking for this-and-that”

This person said “tell me precisely what this technique does”

And I said, “well actually I can’t do that because this is the kind of technology of beggary, we ask to give me this, give me better health, save my son and so on...”. But that’s popular.

Max Weber, in his sociology of religion, says that with most prophets the religious vision is given and offered by a charismatic character, who makes this believable, and then gradually this person disappears and the priesthood then, and I’m now using the words of Max Weber, “the priesthood develops the ritualization of charisma,” and the chapter ends with this phrase “it may well be that in the end, the priest becomes the enemy of the prophet.” Now that’s not always the case but often.

But the priest transforms the religious vision into techniques and practices and mythology. Satan is the mythologization of that force in opposition to *Asha*, and then he became a person, and then there were all sorts of stories about him - and so on.

Origins of Philosophy (Ethics).

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Now I want to switch the subject to Greek philosophy and as to how Herodotus, the Greek historian, for example writes and states that; the Zoroastrians taught their children 3 things: one is horse riding, the use of bow and arrow, and speaking the truth. Would this culture of truth come down from the Zoroastrian days?

Professor Irani:

Oh yes, without any doubt. But the notion becomes degraded because one often thinks of speaking the truth as merely not telling lies. But that is not the essence of the faith, the essence of the faith is grasping a deeper ideal reality, that’s what understanding or grasping the truth is. For example, if you ask me, “how many cups of coffee did you drink this morning” and I say “one” when in fact I had two, I’m telling you falsehood.

But that's not the kind of lie that Zarathustra is talking about, he is talking about the sort of thing in which I see that so-and-so has been treated unjustly and someone says what do you think of this treatment, and I would say something like "well, this is usually the way it is done".

I've lived long in the academic life, and I know that's the usual way administrators put it, "well, that's how it's always done". And I once told the president in a situation in which I think somebody was very unfairly terminated, and I said "here is a competent person, a person who wishes to teach here, he has done nothing wrong. What has happened is that he is in a type of program that we don't want to promote."

And I said, "he is prepared to teach in an analogous one."

And the president said, "this is how it's usually done."

And I said, "but the president has to recognize what is happening to this person, he is not being treated justly."

And he said "well, you know administration implies certain rules and regulations." I said, "if the rules and regulations are such that they lead to injustice, something should be done."

He looked at me and laughed, and said, "what sort of fellow are you to talk in this way?"

But the amazing thing was about 10 or 12 days later he told me "You know I've been thinking about what you said, maybe we'll put him in this other department, talk to him and so on".

Here was a president in whom the spirit of righteousness resonated, and we could talk this way - this is the notion of *truth*.

How the Zoroastrian Concepts of Freewill and Individualism Influenced The Greek Philosophers.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Philosophy originated about 4,000 years ago with the Indo-Iranians and this is according to Oxford University's chronology of philosophers. Also, many Greek philosophers used to live in the Zoroastrian territory and obtain their education in the Zoroastrian territory of the ancient times. Are the Iranians and the Indo-Iranians, the predecessors to Greek philosophy, and when they came into contact with each other how did they influence the Greek thought and thinking?

Professor Irani:

Oh yes, well the earliest visions we have in the *Iliad and Odyssey* and so on, is a tribal religion as all the Indo-European religions were, whether tribal gods and you have to placate the tribal gods to manage to lead a successful life. The gods were so utterly human that they were not above trickery among themselves, and so you had to know that and play along. But that view was transformed and certainly transformed by Socrates, who said that there was such a thing as right and wrong, and how do you get that, by thought! Human thought! And how do tribal societies flourish? They flourish by tradition. This is our tradition. Why are you doing this? Well, that has been the tradition, our ancestors did it, our parents did it, we do it. That notion, that tradition was unacceptable to Socrates.

In the dialogue *Euthyphro*, it's an ironic dialogue. This the last year of the life of Socrates and Euthyphro is a twenty-five-year-old fellow who has received instructions in the temple. And he says, 'oh I've learned all about piety, I know whatever there is to know about it.'

Socrates says, 'let's examine that, what is piety?'

And he says, 'piety is doing what the gods wish and not doing what the gods don't wish'.

And Socrates says, "is this an adequate definition?"

And Euthyphro says, 'yes of course it is. That's what is taught.'

And Socrates says, “yes that may well be, but shouldn’t we examine it?”

That’s the matter, that the human being takes upon himself or herself the authority to examine what is given by tradition, and the traditionalists are horrified at that idea. Who are you to examine something which has come to us from immemorial tradition? I’ve been told that by some of the Zoroastrians who don’t like my views, who are traditionalists, and I say ‘I have nothing against tradition, but I think we should examine it’

And they say, ‘Who are we to examine it?’

(I say), “We are rational human beings, we need no additional authority.”

And so, they say, well, you know the church at one time, the Catholic Church at one time considered this attitude to be an act of pride. A major sin. Gradually that has been restrained.

Well, but you see this is what we face, and as you point out, that notion of free will is not just a separate notion of determinism/free will. The moment you introduce the notion of free will you introduce the right to examine.’

Zoroastrian Enlightenment Moves to Greece.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

I was reading a book by Ruhi Afnan called *Zoroaster’s Influence on Anaxagoras, the Greek Tragedians, and Socrates*, and he, on page 33, he emphasizes that, Anaxagoras being I guess a teacher of the Greek tragedians Socrates, he emphasized, to be skeptic and to freely think.

Professor Irani:

That’s right

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

And that’s the culture

Professor Irani:

Exactly

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

To have the absolute freedom to inquire and question

Professor Irani:

Yes. Yes. This is the Enlightenment. That is the concept of the Enlightenment. In the 18th century, this was raised by the French philosophers, by the English social writers. And by Immanuel Kant in Germany where he wrote an essay in German, “*Was ist die Aufklärung?*”, “What is the Enlightenment?” And he says the Enlightenment is the view where you accept, and he has a Latin phrase, ‘*Sapere Aude.*’ *Sapere* meaning ‘thought’, *Aude* means the same as ‘audacity’; where it means to have the courage to think. Have the courage to think on your own. And having done that, you recognize that you have the right to think. But that’s not the only part because then it follows that you also have the responsibility to judge carefully.

Professor Irani:

This is the Enlightenment. And the Zoroastrian position was the first one, the same emerged in the Socratic Enlightenment of the Greeks, and in the Platonic doctrine this is a very major element.

Zoroastrian Influence On Middle Platonic (Body and Mind Duality).

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

The dictionaries of philosophy, claim that Plato’s middle platonic, which is part of his work, was influenced by Zoroastrianism. In what context, or can you shed some light on how Zoroastrianism influenced Middle Platonic work? And there was great works and pieces in there such as The Republic. Can you tell us a little about this please?

Professor Irani:

One idea, which is characteristic of the thinking of Zarathustra, is this existence in two realms. The existence, which is a mental existence, the mental (*Mainyu*) existence as it is called in Gathic. And the material or tangible existence called the *Gaethya*, and this distinction, that we as human beings possessing a mind can grasp mental existences independently of perceiving their actualizations in this world, and also perceiving objects in the material world.

This separation of two realms which we find in Zarathustra, we find in Plato. Plato called this grasping of the essences which were in the ideal world, the world of ideas. That capacity is called *nous*, and that grasping is the act of *noesis*. This certainly appears nowhere, it appears in Zarathustra, and it appears in Plato. Then it appears later on in European thinking and that's always called Platonic thinking. But this is so characteristic a theme, that many people think that Plato was informed of it in some form or another by the Greeks who lived in Asia Minor. Which was a province of the Persian Empire, and where there were fire temples and major teachers of the faith. I don't know to what extent Plato was influenced by it, but I think he must have heard of it, he was inspired by it, and produced his own conception which was a very interesting one. You don't get the idea of justice by looking at just acts and unjust acts. You make the distinction between Justice and Injustice by grasping the idea of justice and seeing to what extent it's actualized.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Is Zarathustra's view of the world materialistic? Or did he believe in this duality of material and the nonmaterial similar to what you just explained about Plato, whether it's the soul or the mind, we tend to separate that dualism?

Professor Irani:

He definitely had these two realms. The *Mainyu* world and the *Gaethya* world. But he didn't have the notion of a different kind of reality implanted in matter. I think we do have souls and the soul then is judged by its worth, moral worth, *Daena*. And the soul after death is known as the *Urvan*, and that is clearly so, he has a notion of material existence and a non-material existence.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

And is this the duality that later-on Descartes tries to further articulate but in terms of mind?

Professor Irani:

Yes, it's that same theme that dominated philosophy.

Cyrus the Great.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

As Xenophon states, Cyrus the Great, the ancient Zoroastrian King, was a Mazda worshiper, which means a wisdom worshiper. Who was responsible for the education of the Zoroastrian Kings in the field of wisdom?

Professor Irani:

Oh yes, what happened was that the Medes and the Persians who got together, two separate tribes of the whole set of Iranian tribes. They got together with the father or the father-in-law of Cyrus who was a Mede. And Cyrus married his daughter. Cyrus was a Persian, they got together, and a church was established which was the Church of the Achaemenian empire. And the Medes were the organizers, the administrative priests - the ritual priests, and the *Athra-Paiti* (educator) were the teachers, they were usually Persian, and they taught the Gathic message.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

To the emperors and the kings of that time?

Professor Irani:

Yes, and also, I suppose to the more literate public and to the general public. It was a very enlightened population in those days. And the fact that they absorbed this message we can see it in their inscriptions and in their practices.

Cyrus The Savior In The Bible.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Many scholars claim Cyrus was one of Zarathustra's disciples, and also in the Bible we see the name of Cyrus as the anointed one and a savior. In what context is he known to be the savior in the bible? Can you articulate and elaborate this notion for us please?

Professor Irani:

This is what happened, Cyrus viewed himself as a world ruler to establish the *Khshathra*. That means the authority, the dominion, which would organize the world according to *Asha*. And so, he just walked into other empires, other states, and incorporated them into what he called the good state. He did not impose any of his laws on them. Of course, these people had to pay tax literally to support the authority and they had to live by the national laws. But the particular private laws were left to each group and state, family laws were the laws of the people as they had them. And he permitted them to have their own religious temples, religious practices, and so on.

When he conquered Babylon, Babylon was under a tyranny, many Babylonians themselves were agreeable to having him enter Babylon. He entered with a minimal of military friction and one of the first things he did was the Jews were in Babylonian captivity. You know they had been conquered by the grandfather of the king of Babylon and brought to Babylon, the elite, and they went to Cyrus and said, we are prisoners here, etc., and Cyrus freed them. And they said, we have to go back, and we have to build our temple that was destroyed. And so, Cyrus helped them to build the temple and their temple vessels had been confiscated by the Babylonians and he restored those too. So, the Jews said, here is someone who is helping us and our tribe, therefore he is sent by Jehovah to be our helper, and they considered him as the anointed of the Lord.

The Origins of Separation of Church and State.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Professor Richard Fry from Harvard University argues that Cyrus was the first person who demonstrated the concept of separation of church and state. He also claimed Cyrus established a secular society where each person could freely practice their own individual belief. Cyrus is also known for writing the first declaration of human rights; there's a cylinder in the British Museum called the Cyrus Cylinder. Is this because Cyrus believed that basic human rights such as freedom, equality, and justice are universal and therefore they are morally absolute?

Professor Irani:

I think so. He didn't put it that way. We haven't a record of this kind of thing, but he certainly saw that as Zarathustra said, 'Each individual must make an informed and intelligent choice.' Now in order to do that you must be let free. There is also the notion of *Asha* which is justice and so he established the national courts, what we might call the federal courts where any dispute of this kind would be treated fairly. In order to have a standard way of life, he established the rules of the marketplace. So that was governed throughout the empire but in each individual state, they would have their own laws about property transfer, inheritance, and so on. That was for the local people to decide on their own.

Secularism (Religious and Cultural Tolerance).

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

In this book, *Philosophy of History*, by Georg Hegel, he claims, "the Persian Empire is an empire in the modern sense, for we find it consisting of a number of states which are indeed dependent, but which have retained their own individuality, their manners, and laws. The general enactments binding upon all did not infringe upon their political and social ideal synchronous. But even protected and maintained them, so that each of the nations that constitute the whole had its own form of constitution." Can you tell us a little

bit about the formation of the government that Cyrus the Great had established that represents what Hegel is stating for us please?

Professor Irani:

This is the idea that each culture had its own vision of life. And that, that was part of their heritage, and not the function of the emperor to trespass upon it. The emperor merely established a universal society which harmoniously practiced trade and organized in such a way that there is the least amount of friction. This is a very interesting idea. Social friction is viewed as a very damaging thing because of economics.

What has happened with our contemporary societies that we have viewed our welfare so very much in terms of economic advantage, and many people are not satisfied with being just economically adequate. There's this constant need to have more because who knows in the future you may need the money and so on and so forth. This kind of uncertainty and the anxiety has produced a culture which I suppose may have been that sort of thing even in the old days, but today this is a very big problem, and the tribalism is being replaced by the conflict between classes which was of course magnified by the communist vision.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

It seems part of it is because man feels insecure, certain philosopher said that life is nothing but a struggle to survive. Since we equate survival to economics, it seems if we gave everyone blanket security of some form, then perhaps it might hopefully reduce some of that.

Professor Irani:

I hope so, at least that was the view of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, but they are now trying to turn that back; some of that social legislation.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

It seems we need a balance.

Professor Irani:

Exactly. That's the thing in these matters there are always issues where somebody's interest is being imposed upon and one must get the best possible balance. That is what democracy was supposed to be. Instead, it has become a battlefield, but what's the use of complaining about these things. But there must be a vision somewhere that can solve it. Zarathustra's vision is that there is a solution. There is the ideal *Asha*, you need to have the intelligence and the insight to get to it by restraining your personal self-interest or your fears.

Hope (Wisdom Creates Heaven).

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

It seems this notion of heaven that man has is the supreme idea, because we see this world to be imperfect, so it's the perfect state of mind or idea that comes to the mind. Except, we lack the wisdom to create that and in order for someone to do the right thing and progress to that ultimate state it seems Zarathustra reduces finally everything to wisdom. Ultimately, we lack the wisdom, and he puts so much emphasis on this which becomes his God and deity, that is the final frontier.

Professor Irani:

There are two aspects of it. One is grasping the ideal state of the social order where most of the friction lies and even in the natural order because there is friction between us and the natural order too. Diseases, for example, and so on and so forth. So, the curing of diseases becomes a morally worthy act, produces good. One of the reasons why there are so many doctors among the Zoroastrians. This is an idea of some high degree of optimism, we will be able to grasp this truth and we will know what to do. You must get to know what the truth is, you must be able to formulate the proper way to achieve it and you must have the will and the courage to put it into practice. This is the wisdom.

Zoroastrians-by-Choice.

Interviewer Shahrooz Ash:

Can anyone choose this religion and philosophy freely for themselves?

Professor Irani:

Zarathushtra declares this to be a vision, to be chosen by each individual by himself or herself, and doesn't say individuals of this kind or that kind belong to this group or that group. This is an individual faith and therefore it is absolutely inconceivable that you would have thought that this applies only to this group or that group. His whole approach was to move from tribalism to individuality.

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