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**Zarathushtra's Concept of Ahura Mazda:
A Study of the Gathic Texts**

Patrick Haoshyangha Darkhor

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Religion

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

Zarathushtra's Concept of Ahura Mazda: A Study of The Gathic Texts

Patrick H. Darkhor

Zarathushtra, whom the Greeks and Romans called Zoroaster, is the founder of Zarathushtrianism, the ancient religion of Iran. What we know about Zarathushtra comes from his archaic hymns, the Gathas, seventeen poems, arranged in five groups, according to their metres, and containing about six thousand words in all. This thesis will consider one crucial question in the Gathic philosophy: how did Zarathushtra understand the concept of Ahura Mazda? Scholars have offered various interpretations for Zarathushtra's understanding of Ahura Mazda. But the similarities among them are great. They agree in taking the name Ahura Mazda, to mean the "divine being." The possibility that the Gathic texts may suggest other explanations for the character of Ahura Mazda is discussed in this thesis, proposing that it is possible to consider that for Zarathushtra Ahura Mazda meant something within humans which can guide all thoughts and actions of the individual. The Gathic texts give us evidence which suggests that Ahura Mazda can be a human potentiality, a progressive mentality that leads to the awakening of good thought (Spenta Mainyu) in the individual. The thesis also proposes that the concept of Ahura Mazda may have been understood and experienced by Zarathushtra as Vohu Manah (Good Mind), the wisdom that the individual through her/his own decisive actions can achieve.

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Preface

Notes on Translations and Transliterations

In presenting the Gathic texts, I have generally followed S. Insler's translation, The Gathas of Zarathustra as my primary source. I have also quoted L. Mills' The Zend-Avesta and J. Duchesne-Guillemin's The Hymns of Zarathustra, from time to time. In using proper names and technical terms, some inconsistencies will inevitably be noticed when I am quoting authors who used a different system in their own translations. The Avestan names are sometimes given in their Greco-Roman forms ("Zoroaster," "Zoroastrian"). Various forms of such names sometimes occur in quotations in this thesis, but I myself have used the forms found in the source languages (Gathic, Avestan, Parsi). In a few places, I have myself translated some brief passages of the Gathic hymns from the source language. My source for these translations is Jeleel Dustkhah's Parsi Avesta.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims at providing a comprehensive analysis of Ahura Mazda's character based on the Gathas, the only hymns which are considered to be attributable to Zarathushtra. A reason for studying Ahura Mazda is that it appears to be the most critical of many aspects of Zarathushtrianism. Ahura Mazda's name occurs in the Gathas very frequently, and it seems that the study of Ahura Mazda offer a good example of both continuity and development in the Zarathushtrian tradition.

What is more significant for the purpose of this thesis is that it proposes that an examination of the Gathas ought to lead to an expansion of our understanding of Ahura Mazda, which I believe will allow us to discuss more clearly the true meaning of Zarathushtra's conception of Ahura Mazda.

The question of the meaning of the Ahura Mazda's name, and possible interpretations of its character are presented in this thesis. Most scholars are agreed in taking the name Ahura Mazda, as it occurs in the Gathas, to mean, basically the "divine being," hence "God," a concept whose character is largely assimilated to that of the pre-Gathic divinities. The possibility that Zarathushtra's original teachings, the Gathas, may suggest other explanations for the notion of Ahura Mazda is hereby discussed through an examination of the Gathic texts. I believe that the concept of Ahura Mazda may have been understood by Zarathushtra as Vohu Manah (Good

Mind) or Spenta Mainyu (Good Thought), whose attainment can lead the individual in her/his good thoughts and actions. That is to say, Ahura Mazda may mean an empowerment that human beings, through their good thinking, can attain. Zarathushtra might have thought of Ahura Mazda as a human potentiality which represents something that in principle is attainable by the individual.

Arrangement and Method

I have based my entire discussion of Ahura Mazda on the Gathic texts, which represent the earliest phase of Zarathushtra's teachings. The time when Zarathushtra composed his Gathas is a debated question. But the approximate date 1000 B.C.E., which is the mid-point of scholars' various hypotheses, has been chosen for the sake of convenience in this thesis.

The ancient religion of Iran which preceded the Gathas has been labelled the pre-Gathic religion of Iran.

Chapter two of this thesis consists of the following: the historical background of the world into which Zarathushtra was born, the main sources of information concerning the religious beliefs and practices of the early Indo-European settlers, and a description of the Iranian priestly class which appears to have existed before the time of Zarathushtra. This chapter is followed by a discussion in chapter three of Zarathushtra's life in both the traditional

account and the opinion of today's scholars concerning his time and his philosophical thoughts, even though the conflicting evidence and varied nature of the opinions make it difficult to trace precisely the exact time of Zarathushtra. Also included in this third chapter is a section on Zarathushtra's religious activities against the "ritualistic priests" known as *karfans* and *kavis* in the Gathas.

Chapter four presents a description of Zarathushtrian sacred texts (including the Gathas), the various sections of the Gathas, and several important parts of the Avesta are mentioned briefly.

In chapter five scholars' interpretations of Ahura Mazda's character are discussed. It will be pointed out that some of the views put forward here by scholars are based on the assumption that Gathic texts suggest, although they do not explicitly state, that Ahura Mazda is a Supreme Being, who is omnipotent and has an independent existence outside the human mind.

Chapter six focuses on a word study of major Gathic concepts such as Ahura Mazda, Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu. In this chapter the meanings and the terminological affinity of Ahura Mazda, Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu will be presented. Through an examination of some Gathic passages, I will demonstrate that Ahura Mazda's meaning is very similar to that of Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu; in fact, they are one and the same thing.

Chapter seven, the principal section of my thesis aims at providing a comprehensive analysis of Ahura Mazda's character, functions and meaning, based on the Gathic passages. This is continued by a discussion on the importance of personal choice in the struggle against Evil, and Zarathushtra's explanation of the origin of Evil. There are many Gathic passages which suggest two opposite ways of thinking, speaking, and acting between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, the good and evil spirits. These passages provide a firm emphasis on the twin aspects (the goodness of Ahura Mazda and the graveness of Evil) in the human mind. The comparative goodness of Ahura Mazda and the condition of evil in the human mind, the reality of human life, and the importance of human freedom are stated in the Gathas, providing us with the knowledge that the world is an arena for the exercise of human choice, and they show this by laying stress on the importance of human's role in its struggle against evil.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF PRE-GATHIC RELIGION OF IRAN From the Earliest Times to About 1000 B.C.E.

The ups and downs of history including natural catastrophes and calamities, have pushed the pre-Gathic religion of ancient Iran into the obscure background. There is a complete absence of written documents which makes it difficult to estimate the time when Indo-European settlers arrived in Iran and built their first communities of cultures and civilization.

Like other Indo-European peoples who settled elsewhere in the Asiatic continent, the Iranian Aryans learned about the fruits of their ancestors' minds only through the memory that was handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Works like songs, proverbs, riddles, myths and sagas were not written down, and in the transmission of oral tradition, they may have undergone many changes and developments.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that comes from Avestan works (mainly Yashts)¹ that helps us learn some important outlines of the religious beliefs and practices before the time of Zarathushtra. In addition to the Avestan works, we possess, a collection of inscriptions by the

¹Although Avestan texts belong to the period after the death of Zarathushtra, their information regarding the pre-Gathic religion of Iran is of great value to us because they were written down in a period that was very near to the pre-Gathic era.

Achaemenid kings, namely those of Darius the Great (522-486 B.C.E.) and Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.E.), are of significant consideration. Between the time of these inscriptions and the rise of the Sassanian dynasty (3rd- 7th Centuries C.E.) we have no evidence of what happened to the native sources, and during this period we have to get our information from the classical writings, particularly Herodotus' The History. We have also a series of Pahlavi Books and later religious documents such as the Bundahishn and Denkard, which were mostly written in the ninth century C.E., and reflect the theological views of the last years of the Sassanian dynasty. However, in these works there are often passages from the Avestan books that can help us in tracing the development of the pre-Gathic faith of ancient Iran.

The Avestan Books and the Achaemenid Inscriptions

In both the Avestan books, and the Achaemenid inscriptions there are indications that the ancient Iranians were mainly nature worshippers whose religious beliefs and practices closely paralleled those of other Indo-Iranian and Indo-European peoples at the same stage in human history. Their gods seem to have been practically associated with natural objects, with military, social and economic functions. Their religious practices were mainly based on

animal sacrifices,² a respect for fire, and the drinking of the juice of *haoma* plant.³ Water, sun and moon, earth and sky, as well as all the forces of nature, had their worshippers in ancient Iran. These works also indicate that Iranian people paid homage to gods known as Mazda⁴, Vayu⁵,

² According to Bruce Lincoln, performing sacrifice to any of the ancient deities was the chief business of some religions. Sacrifice "plays a crucial role in the religion of all the Indo-European tribes and is at the heart of the cultus in India and Iran. However, later events caused a decline in its usage, as in Iran Zarathustra vigorously condemned cattle sacrifice, while in India the development of the doctrine of *ahimsa*, "noninjury to all living things," inhibited such practices" (Priests, Warriors, and Cattle: A Study in the Ecology of Religions, pg. 66).

³ The *haoma* is a natural intoxicant; it is known as a sacred herb. In the Later Avesta it is referred to as the juice of immortality (Yasna X,I). *Haoma* is equivalent to the Vedic *soma*. It is in both cases a sacred plant. However, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin believes that "the *Haoma* is not only a plant and a liquor, it is also a god. Sacrifices were offered to him and certain parts of the victim, as we have seen, were reserved for him. Being a god, he is killed as he is produced. The Brahmans tell the same thing of *Soma*: 'for *Soma* is a god and they kill him in that they press him' (Shatapatta, 3, 9, 4, 17). The sacrifice of *Haoma* is therefore that of a dying god offered to a god" (Symbols and Values of Zoroastrianism, pg. 82).

According to Jean Varenne, «Le Veda nous assure que le boire procurait une sorte d'ivresse à laquelle les dieux - et tout spécialement Indra - étaient sensibles, comme les hommes. Dès lors, s'il n'y a pas là image ou figure de style, on constatera que le secret du *soma* [/haoma] s'est bien perdu, car celui que l'on presse en Inde de nos jours (dans les temples parsis ou dans les sacrifices pseudo-vediques que célèbrent les pandits) n'a certes pas la propriété de monter à la tête» (Zarathushtra et La tradition mazdéenne, pg. 31).

⁴ The pre-Gathic Iranian religion has been termed as Mazda-worshipping religion, the religion of Mazda - not to be confused with Ahura Mazda of Zarathushtra.

and Mithra⁶, who represented both the good and evil aspects of reality. Another deity was the god known as Zurvan who assumed a minor role in later Iranian religion. Anahita, a female divinity of Semitic origin, was also worshipped in Iran.

From the Avestan books we learn that the early Aryan settlers who settled in Iran, and followed agricultural pursuits, continued to practice the beliefs that they had brought with them from their ancient homeland. These texts name these early settlers as the *paoiryō-tkaesha*, of the primitive Iranian faith. Among these pioneers, there are names like Gaya Maretan who, according to Zarathushtrian anthropogeny, was the first king of Iran, and his successor Haoshyangha was the founder of the first dynasty known as *para-dhata* "of primitive law." The Avestan books also enable us to form some opinion of what doctrines and religious

⁵ According to R.C. Zaehner, "Vayu was a 'high god' in his own right, but this is probably an oversimplification. One thing, however, is quite certain, and that is that he has not the faintest concern for the antithesis of good and evil that is so characteristic of Zoroastrianism" (The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism, pg. 148).

⁶ Mary Boyce believes that this "Iranian god was celebrated as a divinity linked to the sun. The earliest interpreters of the Vedas saw the Indian faith as a primitive one, and understood its gods to be the main personifications of natural forces or phenomena; and Mitra was accordingly taken at first to be a solar deity. The Avestan Mithra is also associated with the sun; and so students of Iranian religion likewise accepted this as the primary concept of the god" (A History of Zoroastrianism, pg. 24).

cults existed before the time of Zarathushtra. For example, in the Gathas (a part of the Avesta) we see a privileged priestly class that Zarathushtra calls *kavis* and *karpan*:

...they who continue to lie to those
along with whom the Karpan and the
Usig⁷ have delivered the cow unto fury,
and the Kavi as well.... They have not
been eager to prosper her and her
pasturage⁸ with truth.⁹

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra speaks of *karpan*s and *kavis* harshly for the hostile position they held against his teachings. It is important to mention that from a Gathic passage (Yasna XXVIII:VII) we learn that king Vistaspa was one of the Kavis who accepted Zarathushtra's doctrines, and became an ally of the Zarathushtrian faith.¹⁰

Greek materials

The earliest Greek historians who wrote about the history of ancient Iran are Herodotus, Strabo, Plutarch, and Agathias whose works date back to a century and a quarter before the end of the Achaemenian empire (558-330 B.C.E.). In Herodotus's writings, we are introduced to an Iranian priestly class called the Magi. The term was regarded as synonymous with learned and wise. The Magi presumably

⁷Usig is another priestly class of ancient Iran.

⁸"Metaphor for the faithful followers of the good vision" (Insler, The Gathas of Zarathustra, pg. 73).

⁹Yasna XLIV:XX, Trans. S. Insler.

¹⁰See Chapter III for more detail on this subject.

continued some religious practices that had existed even before the time of Zarathushtra. The disposal of the dead person by exposure to the heat of the sun, a respect for the elements, fire, water, and earth, the active crusade against noxious creatures, according to Herodotus, are some of the characteristic features of the religious practices and beliefs of the Magi. Some of the practices of the Magi seem to have been shared by the Persians, at the time of Achae-menids.¹¹ For example, the Persians, like the Magi, held the elements of nature sacred. Unlike the Magi, they enclosed the dead in wax, and interred it in the earth. It seems that the differences may have been the result of Zarathushtra's reforms.

The Magi appear to have belonged to a certain Medean tribe which not only kept in touch with Iranian communities in the mountainous areas of Parthia, Bactria, Chorasmia, Medea, and among the Sakas, but also in non-Iranian lands such as Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt. As far as the Iranian communities are concerned, Mary Boyce suggests that each Iranian group had usually its individual priest; but among

¹¹Both the Persians and the Magi are of the Indo-Iranian family though differing in dialect. The Magi were the natives of Medea in the north-west of the Iranian plateau. The Medean Dynasty was founded by King Deioces in 612 B.C.E., and came to an end in 550 B.C.E. when the last king, Astyages, was turned over by his own army to Cyrus who took over the dynasty from the Medes and thereby established the Persian Empire of the Achae-menids, named after his Grand father Hakhāmanish, or Achaemenes as Herodotus called him.

the Medes, Magi supplied priests for the rest of the other tribes.¹²

In the Magi system, as Herodotus reports, we find a polytheism which is similar to that of the earliest Indo-Aryans' hymn-cycle, the Rg-Veda. Both in the Magi doctrine and in the Rg-Veda we see a plurality of gods and demi-gods which in many cases have the same names. For example, Mithra, Mazda and Vayu were definitely worshipped by the Indo-Aryan groups of both Iran and India.

Briefly then, the principal sources for the study of pre-Gathic religious practices of ancient Iran are the Avestan books, Achaemenid inscriptions and the Greek sources. They enable us to learn of the doctrines and religious beliefs before the time of Zarathushtra. For example, when the writers of the Avestan texts talk about Anahita as the guardian spirit of water, and describe king Haoshyangha as sacrificing unto the sacred water in a certain manner, they may, in these Avestan passages, be giving us some indications of what beliefs this ancient king and his people had about this female divinity. Although we should not class the contents of these sources as the historical fact about the religion of a king who is remote from us by at least, according to Zarathushtrian chronology, three or four thousand years, we may use them in order to familiarize ourselves with the perspective that our ancient fathers and

¹² A History of Zoroastrianism, pp. 11-12.

mothers some thousand years ago had about the religious beliefs and practices of the time that preceded their era.

ZARATHUSTRA'S BIOGRAPHY

The origin of Zarathushtra's name

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'wise,' or learned man, as we ourselves often do so.

'Ushtra' (𐬨𐬀𐬭𐬀𐬎𐬌) is also an Avestan word and means camel. In the Avesta, there is a story about Zarathushtra's name and those in his family. All the names in his family have some association with mares and stallions, horses and cattle, camels and so on. This might be an indication that Zarathushtra and his family belonged to a group of herding people. Arab writers use 'Zarthusht' which is an abbreviated Avestan form of the name. The Western version of the name has been taken from Latin 'Zoroastres,' which owes its root to a similar Greek spelling.

Zarathushtra's date according to scholars

It is not possible to locate Zarathushtra precisely either geographically or chronologically, although it is clear that he was the founder of Zarathushtrianism, and lived in Iran. Some scholars believe that Zarathushtra's date cannot exactly be ascertained within a period of some six or seven hundred years, for there is no solid evidence for this estimation. Some historians in the ancient world had given the astonishing date of 6000 B.C.E. for Zarathushtra's time. Aristotle, for example, had this view, which has with much conviction been rejected by today's scholarship. Karl F. Geldner in the Encyclopedia Britannica, writes that the composition of the Gathas (the earliest part of the Avesta) can be traced back to the fourteenth century

B.C.E., and that this can therefore be considered the period of Zarathushtra. According to Mary Boyce, the composition of the oldest Indian scripture, the Rg-Veda, is likely to have commenced some time around 1700 B.C.E.. The language of its songs, according to Boyce, in their remaining form, is very close to that of Zarathushtra's hymns, the Gathas. Boyce believes that

not only the outward form of the prophet's works, but also striking archaic elements in their content, make it reasonable to suppose that he himself cannot have lived later than about 1000 B.C.. He may in fact have flourished some time earlier.¹³

On the other hand, William Jackson in his Zoroastrian Studies, argues that Zarathushtra's date of birth was in the seventh century B.C.E.. R.C. Zaehner in his The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism, follows the traditional date the Zarathushtrians assign to their prophet (258 years before

¹³ A history of Zoroastrianism, pg. 3. In her footnote, Mary Boyce also explains "that the date of Zoroaster was somewhere between 1000 and 900 B.C., or perhaps even earlier, was formerly the opinion of most Western scholars, including E.Meyer, F.C. Andreas, C.P. Tiele and R. Kent. The support given to the date of "258 years before Alexander" in recent decades is largely due to the powerful advocacy of A. Meillet, E. Herzfeld, S.H. Taqizadeh and W.B. Henning; but the authenticity of this date has latterly been strongly challenged again" (Ibid., pg. 3).

And in her recent book, Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour (1992), Boyce pushes back the date of Zarathushtra to a more ancient time. She now believes that Zarathushtra may have lived some times between 1700 and 1000 B.C.E. (pg. 30).

Alexander¹⁴), and argues that Zarathushtra's date

would then be 588 BC, and this date we may take to refer to the initial success of his prophetic mission which consisted in the conversion of King Vishtaspa when Zoroaster was forty years old. Since he is traditionally said to have lived seventy-seven years, we will not be far wrong in dating him at 628-551 BC.¹⁵

Kavi Vishtaspa was the king of Chorasmia, an area south of Caspian Sea in Central Iran. According to Zarathushtrian tradition, he became, after his conversion, the Constantine of the creed, parallel, as William Jackson puts it, to "the Raja Bimbisara, if not the Asoka, of Buddhism."¹⁶ According to the Avesta, "Kavi Vishtaspa through his good thinking accepted Zarathushtra's teachings, ... and gained the knowledge that led him to the place of honour."¹⁷

In spite of the great research done in the field of Indo-European religious literatures, archaeology, ethnology, philology and ancient history, the statement made by M. N.

¹⁴ The name Alexander for the Iranians means the collapse of Persepolis, the extinction of the Achaemenid Empire as well as the death of Darius III, the last king of the Achaemenid kings. This occurred in 330 B.C.E..

¹⁵ pg. 33.

¹⁶ Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran, pg. 37.

¹⁷ «کی گشتاسب» با نیروی «مکه» و سرورهای «منش نیک» ... به

دانشی دست یافت که «مزدا اهره» ی پاک، «در پرتو» آتش، برافراشته است.
Yasna LI:XVI. From the Parsi Avesta. Vol. I, by Jeleel Dustkhah. Translation of the passage is mine.

Dhalla seems true:

we know everything of the life of
Mohammed; we know something of the lives
of Buddha and Jesus; we know practically
nothing of the life of Zoroaster.¹⁸

Zarathushtra's religious life

Although we may know little about what Zarathushtra was, we may be able to say what he was not. He was neither a priest (not at least by profession) nor a scribe, nor an apostle who through his predecessors inherited some form of religious learning.¹⁹ He was not a law maker, divine or royal, intending to lay down certain laws to be honoured without question.²⁰ He was not even a 'Vedic' rshi chanting praises in honour of his favourite gods and goddesses.²¹ There are no verses in the Gathas indicating that Zarathushtra beheld an angel sent down by God, or heard a loud divine voice from the void, or experienced an ecstasy to grasp the Holy.²² Judging from the Gathas, it is possible to say that Zarathushtra was

neither a blind follower nor a
promulgator of an ancient cult.

¹⁸ M.N. Dhalla. History of Zoroastrianism, pg. 310.

¹⁹ A.A. Jafarey. "God in the Gathas," in In Search of the Divine: Some Unexpected Consequences of Interfaith Dialogue, Ed. Larry D. Shinn, pg. 95.

²⁰ Ibid., pg. 95.

²¹ Ibid., pg. 95.

²² Ibid., pg. 95.

Likewise, he [was] not a promoter or a reformer of received traditions. He [was] not a promised 'Messiah' to come/return to complete/ complement an unfinished task.²³

Zarathushtra, a thoughtful seeker

In his Gathas, Zarathushtra calls himself a *manthran*, one who provokes thoughts:

Yes, I shall speak out. Give
ear now, listen now, ye who
seek from both near and far.
(Listen) now, all of you, to
this (respect). I speak of the
best thing of this existence
in accordance with truth.²⁴

Zarathushtra's aim consisted essentially of striving after perfection by good thought, word and deed. His mind was filled with a spiritual zeal for relieving humanity and bettering human condition. He was a knowledgeable man, and as such, was concerned with life lived in this very universe. In his Gathas, we see him consciously inspired with a hope of ameliorating humans' lives and liberating them from falsehood of their existence:

...may we be those who shall
heal this world! Wise One ...,
be present to me with support
and with truth, so that one
shall become convinced even
where his understanding shall
be false.²⁵

²³ Ibid., pg. 95.

²⁴ Yasna XLV:I, IV. The Gathas of Zarathustra, Trans. S. Insler.

²⁵ Yasna XXX:IX, Trans. S. Insler.

The falsehood which Zarathushtra was cognizant of was due to an Evil Principle against whom all humans must struggle all their lives for their own salvation.

Zarathushtra was born and brought up in an Aryan environment. His religious innovation was based on his familiarity with the "ritualistic priests (*karpans*), and their pranks in duping and exploiting the people,"²⁶ and on his ability in dismissing the beliefs and practices of those priests. To Zarathushtra, these priests were, without doubt, the followers of *druj* (lie), and he condemned them as the associates of the malevolent deities (*daeva*) and detractors of the good thought, distancing themselves from the truth.²⁷

Zarathushtra's attitude was quite radical. In fact, this attitude engaged him with a harsh struggle against the sacrificial priests. The religious corruption of his time, strongly offended Zarathushtra:

To what land to flee? Where shall I go
to flee? They exclude (me) from my
family and from my clan. The community
with which I have associated has not
satisfied me, nor those who are the
deceitful rulers of the land....²⁸

Zarathushtra spoke particularly against sagacious princes (*kavis*) and their malicious priests (*karpans*), calling them

²⁶ A.A. Jafarey, pg. 96.

²⁷ Yasna XXXII:XI, Trans. S. Insler.

²⁸ Yasna XLVI:I, Trans. S. Insler.

willingly blind and deaf and charging them with holding back the life-affirming principles of truth and good thought through their deceitful acts and doctrines.²⁹

In summary, the name Zoroaster derives from the Latin Zoroastres, which owes its roots to the Greek form Zoroastres. In the Avesta, the name appears frequently as Zarathushtra which means 'old camel,' but the precise meaning of the name remains uncertain. There is a diversity of opinion among scholars on Zarathushtra's date, ranging from 1700 B.C.E. to 588 B.C.E.. Zarathushtra's religious life seems inspired by his resistance to the doctrines of an ancient Iranian priestly class whom he called *karpans*, and his struggle against their false beliefs and practices. In his hymns, Zarathushtra describes himself as the follower of the good thought and the true enemy of *druj* or falsehood.

²⁹ Yasna LI:IV, Trans. S. Insler.

CHAPTER FOUR

ZARATHUSHTRA'S WORK

Zarathushtra's works have come down to us in the form of hymns, the Gathas, which are incorporated unto the Avesta. The Avesta is the ancient sacred book of Iran, and consists of twenty-one *nasks* or books, a summary of which is found in Denkart.³⁰ Of the twenty-one books of the Avesta only a fragment remains today. This fragment, however, is reasonably great in length, being one and half times longer than the Qur'an. The Avesta consists of hymns, narratives, formulas and laws which were composed and written over a long period of time.

The Gathas

The Gathas are the oldest section which is written in an earlier form of the language than the rest of the Avesta. Linguistically, there is a distinction between the language of the Gathas and the rest of the Avesta. The language of the Gathas is known as "Gathic language" for its more ancient character; the language of the other parts of the Avesta is simply called "Avestan" (see table of the Avestan alphabetical system at the end of this chapter). The Avestan language belongs to what we call the Indo-Iranian branch of the Aryan or Indo-European family. Parsi is its closest

³⁰ Denkart is the Pahlavi text which contains the legendary history of Zarathushtra and his teachings. In its present form, Denkart dates from the ninth century C.E..

modern relative, aside from other Iranian dialects found in regions lying between the Himalayas and Asiatic Russia. Avestan is exceedingly close to Sanskrit. The Iranian word *hindu* as compared with the Sanskrit *sindhu* shows conspicuous sound changes that differentiate the two forms of one family language, (see table below).³¹ Today, many of the Avestan words with slight changes have remained in the Parsi language.

Fr.	Engl.	Parsi	Sank.	Avestan
L'un	One	yek	ēka	aeva
deux	Two	deu	dvā	dva
trois	Three	çe	tri	thri
quatre	Four	chehar	čatvār	čathwar
cinq	Five	panj	pāñča	pañča
six	Six	šiš	ṣaṣ	xšvas
sept	Seven	haft	śaptā	hapta
huit	Eight	hast	aṣṭa	aṣṭa
neuf	Nine	na	nāva	nava
dix	Ten	da	dāśa	dasa

The Gathas are considered to be the only hymns attributable to Zarathushtra. There are two principal sections that can be distinguished within the entire Avesta. The first division contains the Yasna (which includes the Gathas), the Visparard or Visp-rat which is a shorter

³¹ Evidently, these sound changes have taken place in most Indo-European languages. Despite these phonetic changes, the Avestan language and the language of the Veda are closer to one another than any other Indo-European groups, with the exception of Lithuanian and Slavonic.

liturgy when compared with a longer liturgy such as Yasna, and the Vindevdat (which is often wrongly called Vendidad), which means "Law against the Demons," and is largely concerned with ritual purity. The other section of the Avesta includes the Khurda Avesta or fragmented Avesta (which has mistakenly been called "The Little Avesta") and Yashts, which are the main portion of the liturgy.

The Yasna

The Yasna, (the Sanskrit term is *yajna*) is the main section of the Avesta which includes invocation, exhortation, confession, adoration, and offerings. It is comprised of five Gathas and a group of formulas for liturgy. The Yasna is divided into seventy-two chapters. The five Gathas comprised seventeen chapters (28-34, 43-51, 53) of the Yasna, and are considered to be the work of Zarathushtra himself, though there is some scholarly disagreement on what Zarathushtra composed. Some believe that the Gathas are the very words composed by Zarathushtra;³² others argue that the Gathas were originally composed by Zarathushtra, but some hymns were added by his immediate associates and/or succeeding ministers in a later time³³; still others think that the Gathas, although composed by Zarathushtra himself,

³² R.C. Zaehner has this view.

³³ Mary Boyce, S. Insler and A. Jafarey have similarly offered this interpretation.

were preserved by word of mouth for centuries before they were written down. At this time there might have appeared some transmutation of or even an addition to the original hymns.³⁴

The Gathas were composed in five different metres of 'Vedic' form and are divided into five sections of different lengths:

I. **The Gatha AHUNAVAITI**, has three stichs with sixteen syllables in each stanza. This Gatha has seven chapters (songs) and a total of 101 stanzas. It consists of Yasna XXVIII-XXXIV.

II. **The Gatha USTAVATTI** is named from the word which begins it.³⁵ It is arranged in five stichs of eleven syllables in each stanza, and has four songs (Yasna XLIII-XLVI), and a total of 66 stanzas.

III. **The Gatha SPENTAMAINYU**, consists of Yasna XLVII-L. Its metre is Trishtup, as each of its line has eleven syllables. It contains a total of forty-one stanzas.

IV. **The Gatha VOHU XSHATHRA (VOHUKHSHATHRA)**, is comprised of

³⁴ L. Mills holds this view on the originality of the Gathas.

³⁵ L. Mills in his commentary on this Gatha writes that "the fact that the word usta possesses special significance may have influenced the minds of the Parsis of a later age, inducing them to associate this first chapter with happy anticipations, but it was of course not owing to any such circumstances that the name was given to the Gatha. The Gatha, like its fellows, has its existence as a unit from the nature of its metre" (The Zend-Avesta, Vol.XXXI, part III, pg. 91).

three stichs and has one single chapter, Yasna LI. This Gatha has twenty-two lines of fourteen syllables with caesura in the middle.

V. The Gatha **VAHISTA ISHTIS** is made up of six stichs and has also one song, with ten stanzas. It consists of chapter LIII of the Yasna.

In all seventeen chapters of the Gathas there are 240 +1³⁶ stanzas of about 6000 words which laconically outline what Zarathushtra observed, found, thought, spoke, discovered, communicated, developed, attained and taught.

The contents of the Gathas are very varied. They are ethical, social, autobiographical as well as philosophical. They are hymns of instruction in the fundamental teachings of Zarathushtra, and their theme is mainly concerned with describing the nature and the outcome of the choice between Good and Evil, Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, Truth and Lie, which are manifestations of the good spirit and the bad spirit. There is a great deal of material in the Gathas, which is concerned with the most fundamental matters of life. In his Gathas, we continuously find Zarathushtra as a questioning seeker of Good Thought, who asks many questions that finally become answers through his thoughtful creativity. His questions and answers show how Zarathushtra commenced his

³⁶ Yasna LIV seems as if it originally belonged to Y. LIII. It is therefore, considered by some translators of the Gathas, notably L. Mills, to be a part of the Gatha **VAHISTA ISHTI**.

search for his goal and how he finally attained it. In one Yasna we see how he turns to nature and himself; how he looks around himself, and how he begins to investigate the environment and beyond. He asks:

Who gave the (recurring) sun
and stars their (undeviating)
way?

Who established that whereby
the moon waxes, and whereby
she wanes?

Who from beneath hath
sustained the earth and the
clouds above that they do not
fall?

Who made the waters and the
plants?

Who to the wind has yoked on
the storm-clouds, the swift
and fleetest two?

Who...made the light and the
darkness?

Who...made sleep and the zest
(of waking hours)?³⁷

Zarathushtra pursues the answers to these questions and goes on to ask more. He now shifts his questions from nature to society:

Who ... hath made the son
recurring the father (who made
him beloved)?

[Who] hath made the Mother-
kine, the producer of joy?

And who is evil? For which is

³⁷ Yasna XLIV:III-V, Trans. L. Mills.

the wicked? Or which is
himself the (foremost) wicked
one?

[H]ow shall I banish this
Demon-of-the-Lie from us hence
to those beneath who are
filled with rebellion?³⁸

He goes further, and faces an immediate problem; he asks the
question whether gods and priests can be good guides:

...[Are] the gods good rulers in any
way? Yes, I ask this (about them), they
who continue to lie to those³⁹ along
with whom the Karpan and the Usig⁴⁰
have delivered the cow⁴¹ unto fury, and
the Kavi as well. ... They have not been
eager to prosper her and her pastur-
age⁴² with truth.⁴³

And going even further; he asks more questions until he is
brought to realization of his virtuous spirit by the
awakening of his own understanding, which was drawn through
his own personal struggle with the force of evil within
himself:

Yes, I have already realized Thee to be
virtuous, Wise Lord, when [you]
[Virtuous Spirit] attended me with good

³⁸ Yasna XLIV:VI-VII, XII-XIII, Trans. L. Mills.

³⁹ "Most probably the evil rulers of the lands"
(Insler, pg. 73).

⁴⁰ "Another traditional type of priest" (Insler, pg.
73).

⁴¹ "The good vision" (Insler, pg. 73).

⁴² "Metaphor for the faithful followers of the good
vision" (Insler, pg. 73).

⁴³ Yasna XLIV:XX, Trans. S. Insler.

thinking and asked me: *"Who art thou? To which side dost thou belong?"*⁴⁴

Then I said to [you] first: *"(I am) Zarathustra. If I were able, I would be a true enemy to the deceitful one [Ahriman or the evil spirit] but a strong support to the Truthful One [Ahura Mazda]."*⁴⁵

Briefly, Zarathushtra's works, the Gathas are arranged in five groups of seventeen chapters, according to their metres, and containing about six thousand words in all. The language of the Gathas is an archaic one, and differs from the Avestan language. The Gathas are considered to be the oldest parts of the Avesta, and the only hymns which can be attributed to Zarathushtra himself. However, there is some scholarly disagreement on what Zarathushtra composed. Although, the Gathas are brief and laconic, they adequately outline what Zarathushtra observed, found, discovered, spoke, communicated, developed, attained and taught.

⁴⁴ Yasna XLIII:VII, Trans. S. Insler. Italics are Insler's.

⁴⁵ Yasna XLIII:VIII, Trans. S. Insler. Italics are Insler's.

Avestan alphabetical system:

Vowels

#	Av.	Parsi	Latin Eq.
1	ا	آ	a short
2	اَ	آَ	a long
3	ه	ه	e short
4	هَ	هَ	e long
5	و	و	o short
6	وَ	وَ	o long
7	و	و	o short
8	وَ	وَ	o long
9	اَ	آ	ā
10	اَ	آن	ā
11	ی	ای	i short
12	یَ	ای	i long
13	و	ام	u short
14	وَ	ام	ū long

Consonants

#	Av.	Parsi	Latin Eq.
15	ک	ک	k
16	گ	گ	g
17	خ	خ	x = kh
18	غ	غ	gh = gh
19	چ	چ	č = ch
20	ج	ج	ǰ
21	ت	ت	t
22	د	د	d
23	ث	ث	θ = th
24	ذ	ذ	ð = dh
25	ط	ط	ṭ
26	پ	پ	p
27	ب	ب	b
28	ف	ف	f
29	و	و	w
30	ح	انگ	ṅ = ang
31	ک	انگ	ñ = ang
32	ن	ن	n
33	ن	ن	n̄
34	م	م	m
35	ی	ی	y
36	ی	ی	y
37	و	و	v

#	Av.	Parsi	Latin Eq.
38	د.د	و	v
39	ر	ر	r
40	س	س	s
41	ز	ز	z
42	ش	ش	√ s=sh
43	ش	ش	√ s=s'h
44	ش	ش	√ s(y)
45	ث	ث	√ z
46	ه	ه	h
47	خ	خ	h=kh
48	خ	خ	x ^v =kh ^v
49	ی	ی	y

Av. = Avestan

CHAPTER FIVE

Scholars' Interpretations of Ahura Mazda

Scholars in Indo-European studies such as A. V. W. Jackson, M. N. Dhalla, Mary Boyce, J. H. Moulton, W. W. Malandra, and others have offered different interpretations for Zarathushtra's conception of Ahura Mazda. But the similarities among them are great. Perhaps the most significant is the agreement that Zarathushtra's Ahura Mazda, is basically a "mighty power," hence "God," a concept whose character is largely similar to that of the pre-Gathic divinities. For instance, A. V. W. Jackson gives this definition for the character of Ahura Mazda:

At the head of the host of
heaven, as supreme ruler over
the kingdom of good, of truth,
of light, stands Ahura Mazda,
or Ormazd, the Lord God of
Iran.⁴⁶

Quite similar is the opinion of M. N. Dhalla who, in his Zoroastrian Theology, interprets Ahura Mazda as the Supreme Being, who is omniscient and has an independent existence outside the human mind. By using the Pahlavi works, namely the Denkart (9th century C.E.), as his primary source, Dhalla describes Ahura Mazda as the prime source of the universe who has no beginning and has no end. He states that

⁴⁶ Zoroastrian Studies, pg. 39, V. 12.

Ormazd⁴⁷ ever was, is, and
will ever be. He is the causer
of causes, himself being
causeless. Everything in the
world has some superior,
Ormazd has none. [He is] alone
who is called all-knowing
one.⁴⁸

Dhalla, moreover, emphasizes that Ahura Mazda is the creator of Vohu Manah or Good Mind (which will be discussed in the next chapter), whom he considers to be "the first after Ahura Mazda in the entire creation, and therefore standing next only to Ormazd himself."⁴⁹

Dhalla speaks of Vohu Manah as a celestial being (an archangel) who resides in the human mind, and his duty is "to record the doings of mankind, ... and to keep account of their thoughts, words, and deeds."⁵⁰ It is Vohu Manah, according to Dhalla, who, while in the human mind, spreads the instruction of good thought in individuals, and as their guest brings them superior knowledge, and gifts them with wisdom:

Through the possession of Vohuman [Vohu Manah] he [the individual] comes to a better understanding of good and evil, and the possession of Vohuman serves to explain to him Vohuman's true nature. The man who loves Vohuman and his wisdom learns the discrimination between good and evil and thus gratifies Ormazd.

⁴⁷ Ormazd is the Pahlavi form for Ahura Mazda.

⁴⁸ Zoroastrian Theology, pp. 220-221.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pg. 228.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pg. 229.

[Vohu Manah] resides in the human conscience, and imparts wisdom; and when he is lodged and treasured there in the heart of the faithful, he increases man's knowledge of religion.⁵¹

Vohu Manah like Ahura Mazda, according to Dhalla, occupies the highest rank in a celestial hierarchy. Dhalla believes that Vohu Manah represents Ahura Mazda, and "[like him] he helps man to dispel the darkness of ignorance and its concomitant vices."⁵²

Similar interpretations like those of Jackson and Dhalla of the character of Ahura Mazda are appealing for one good reason: the textual evidence. A number of Gathic passages evidently suggest, although they do not strongly state, that the divine is Ahura Mazda, who is an object of worship. The reality is that in his Gathas, Zarathushtra speaks of Ahura Mazda in a very subtle way, and therefore we can find as many meanings for Ahura Mazda as we like depending on our terms, references and interpretations.

Interpretations of Ahura Mazda's character and functions have often been discussed by scholars in the context of the question of whether Ahura Mazda already belonged to the pre-Gathic pantheon, or whether Zarathushtra proclaimed the existence of Ahura Mazda and raised "Him" to a supreme position over the gods that existed before his time. J. H.

⁵¹ Ibid., pg. 230.

⁵² Zoroastrian Theology, pg. 28.

Moulton, for instance, regards Ahura Mazda as a major divinity that was elevated over an older Iranian god, Mithra, an elevation which is also recognized by Mary Boyce:

Thus it seems probable that the Iranian Ahura Mazda was exalted over Mithra even before Zoroaster preached, being recognized as a greater god by the Persians as well as by the Avestan peoples.⁵³

W.W. Malandra's study of Zarathushtra's conception of Ahura Mazda leads to a similar interpretation. In his book, An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion, Malandra examines the Gathic passages in which the word Ahura Mazda occurs. He suggests that in the Gathas,

[Ahura Mazda] is described to us in terms that show that he was experienced both as the supreme creator of the universe, the mighty lord who ultimately controls the destiny of all, and as a personal deity of those who worship him.⁵⁴

The manifestation of Ahura Mazda in the Gathas is clearly linked with Vohu Manah or Good Mind. Like Dhalla, Mary Boyce interprets the word Vohu Manah as the proper name of a divinity which can be distinguished from Ahura Mazda. According to Boyce, it would seem plausible to assume that the basic meaning of the name Vohu Manah is not identical

⁵³ Boyce, A History of Zoroastrianism, pg. 37.

⁵⁴ An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion, pp. 44-45.

with that of Ahura Mazda, and this assumption is consistent with the way in which the word Vohu Manah is used in the Gathas, where it evidently occurs as a proper name. This leads Boyce to recognize the character of Vohu Manah as an archangel standing next to Ahura Mazda:

At the heart of Zoroaster's divine system is of course Ahura Mazda, and close to him the six [Amesha Spentas], who as the first-created, shared in his fashioning of the other *spenta* beings. Around them are grouped [the] lesser *yazatas*, knowing no rivalry or emulation, but aiding one another, as they are ready to aid mankind, in order to achieve the one great aim of conquering evil. To take some clear, uncomplicated examples, Vohu Manah, as guardian of cattle, has his *hamkars* the Moon-*yazata*, ...and also Geus Urvan.⁵⁵

Boyce's interpretation of Ahura Mazda like those of other scholars, is based on the way the Gathas form their description of Ahura Mazda. In the Gathas, there is, according to Boyce, "only one divine being worthy to be worshipped, a *yazata*, namely Ahura Mazda, the Lord Wisdom."⁵⁶ In fact, in some Gathic passages, Zarathushtra appears to have recognized that there is only one God that

⁵⁵ A History of Zoroastrianism, pg. 267.
Geus Urvan is, according to Boyce, a divine being who appears to have been created by the "recurrent acts of worship." It is generally agreed that "Geus Urvan is to be identified with vedic Tvastr, the Fashioner" (Ibid., pg. 81).

⁵⁶ A History of Zoroastrianism, pg. 192.

is the most "bountiful spirit,"⁵⁷ and he (Zarathushtra) is helped by the power of that spirit:

Yea, I conceived of Thee as
bountiful, O Ahura Mazda! When
(Thy messenger) with Good Mind
near approached me, and with
your words I first impressed
(my soul)....⁵⁸

A further indication that Ahura Mazda can be a divine being, may be found in Yasna LI:IV:

(And they cry aloud to Thee, O Mazda! I
speaking with them, and in their name):
Where is the (promised) lord of our
thrif...Where does he stand to (show
us) mercy? ...From what direction comes
Thy best Mind (to inspire and to guide)?
And whence (again), O Great Creator! Thy
Sovereign Power (to be our ruler and
defence)?⁵⁹

Or elsewhere in a Gathic passage there is a dialogue between Zarathushtra and a divine being other than Ahura Mazda:

...counsel us with regard to what has
been asked by us [Zarathushtra] of thee.
For what is counseled through thy
effort, but belongs to the forceful,
since the Ruling One [Ahura Mazda] could
create thee to be powerful and
forceful.⁶⁰

Ahura Mazda is used, however, in a different fashion elsewhere in the Gathas; for sometimes it seems to represent the power within Zarathushtra himself through the way in

⁵⁷ Yasna XLIII:VI, Trans. L. Mills.

⁵⁸ Yasna XLIII:XI, Trans. L. Mills.

⁵⁹ Trans. L. Mills.

⁶⁰ Yasna XLIII:X, Trans. S. Insler.

which he thinks, perceives or acts. In the Gathas we cannot find any passage in which Ahura Mazda cannot be understood to mean exactly what the word signifies itself - wisdom. Accordingly, Ahura Mazda may be understood as wisdom which can enter and dwell in the person of developed mind. This will be discussed in chapters six and seven.

To summarize this chapter, we have seen that, on the basis of certain Gathic passages, many scholars in Indo-European studies have suggested that Ahura Mazda is the Supreme God, and Zarathushtra in his hymns, conceives this god as the creator of the universe, who is changeless, first and foremost.⁶¹ Some scholars regard as likely that Zarathushtra, in his Gathas, exalts Ahura Mazda to a supreme place over the gods that existed before his own time.⁶² There is a scholarly argument over the question of whether or not Ahura Mazda belonged to the pre-Gathic pantheon of Iran. It seems to some scholars that Vohu Manah is also regarded in the Gathas as an entity, who rests in the human mind, and guides the individual in her/his thoughts, words and actions.⁶³ However, some other scholars believe that Vohu Manah is an independent divinity which is also worshipped in the Gathas by Zarathushtra. A majority of scholars appear to agree with the latter view. Boyce, for instance,

⁶¹ Jackson's and Dhalla's interpretations.

⁶² Moulton's and Boyce's interpretations.

⁶³ Dhalla's view.

believes that Vohu Manah is regarded and worshipped by
Zarathushtra as a god.

CHAPTER SIX

WORD STUDY

AHURA MAZDA, VOHU MANAH and SPENTA MAINYU

The compound word Ahura Mazda (دین داناگرویس) means literally 'the Lord Wisdom,' i.e. 'the Wise Lord.' The collocation Ahura Mazda, which united into the composite form of Ahuramazda at the time of the Achaemenians, as appears in the Old Persian inscriptions, and into Ormazd in the Pahlavi works, always keeps the separate forms in the Gathas. The forms Ahura or Mazda or the combinations Ahura Mazda or Mazda Ahura are variously used in the Gathic texts for the sake of convenience, without any distinction, and they all have the same meaning:

O Mazda! the holy, bountiful
Ahura, (... people ...), are
seeking now (to gain and learn
from) me, O Mazda Lord! Thus,
O Ahura Mazda! this Zarath-
ustra loves the Spirit, and
every man most bounteous prays
(beside him)....⁶⁴

Ahura (دین داناگ)

The term ahura, an Aryan word for 'lord,' 'master,' or 'chief,' in the Avestan language means the life-giver; it is also the word for God in the Avesta; and the name of the 1th, 8th, 15th and 23rd day of every month.⁶⁵ The Sanskrit

⁶⁴ Yasna XLVI:VII-IX, XLIII:XVI, Trans. L. Mills.

⁶⁵ Ahura in Indo-Iranian times usually applied to both gods and humans. According to Mary Boyce, it was very possible that the human ahuras were "the members of

form for Ahura is asura. Both *ahura* and *asura* developed on very different lines in the civilizations of India and Iran. In India the increasing importance of *devas* led to the gradual diminution of the importance of *asuras*;⁶⁶ while in Iran the *ahuras*' gain resulted in the reduction of the *daivas* to the level of 'demons' or 'false or hostile gods.'

Mazda (مزدکرس)

Mazda is an Avestan word and means intelligence, wisdom or truth. "The Wise, the Knowing One, ... is of the same temperament with truth."⁶⁷ It would seem possible that Zarathushtra added the epithet "Mazda" to Ahura in attempt to identify the purpose of the goal for which he was in search. In the Avesta, we find the following titles for Mazda: "the greatest," "the best," "the most understanding," "the most wise," "the highest in righteousness," "the one who possesses the great joy," and "who is perfect in form:"

My first name is Source of Knowledge and
Wisdom; my third name is Powerful; my
sixth name is Understanding; my eight is
Knowledge; my thirteenth name is the

the tribal council who were first addressed by the respectful title of *ahura* 'lord', which then came to be used also in invocations of [the] celestial beings, conceived as especially concerned with the wise and just conduct of human affairs" (Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour, pg. 55).

⁶⁶ Asuras took on the character of "demons" in the Indian pantheon.

⁶⁷ Yasna XXIX:VI-VII, Trans. S. Insler.

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O Good Mind [Vohu Manah] and
Wise Lord [Ahura Mazda], Come
at my call to give me
support.⁷²

This is more evident in another Gathic texts:

(And when perfection shall have been
attained) then shall the blow of
destruction fall upon the Demon of
Falsehood, (and her adherents shall
perish with her), but swiftest in the
happy abode of the Good Mind [Vohu
Manah] and of Ahura the righteous saints
shall gather, they who proceed in their
walk (on earth) in good repute (and
honour).⁷³

In the Gathas, when Ahura Mazda is placed in a passage
Good Word and Deed often appear "...I have just now,
knowingly through truth, seen the Wise One [Ahura Mazda] in
a vision to be Lord of the word and deed stemming from good
spirit [Vohu Manah]"⁷⁴ When Vohu Manah is placed where
Ahura Mazda appears, *angra mainyu* or falsehood is expressly
condemned: "Wise One [Ahura Mazda], where are those sincere
ones who, through their possession of good thinking [Vohu
Manah], make even immortals decrees and painful legacies
disappear?"⁷⁵

Furthermore, an analysis of the use of the names Vohu
Manah and Ahura Mazda in many Gathic passages leads to the
conclusion that Vohu Manah has no separate existence from

⁷² Yasna XXVIII:III, Trans. J. Duchesne-Guillemin.

⁷³ Yasna XXX:X, Trans. L. Mills.

⁷⁴ Yasna XLV:VIII, Trans. S. Insler.

⁷⁵ Yasna XXXIV:VII, Trans. S. Insler.

Ahura Mazda. In other words, Vohu Manah is not to be understood as an independent concept but as another name of Ahura Mazda. As such, Vohu Manah appears either alongside with the name Ahura Mazda, or is used alone by itself as an epithet to represent Ahura Mazda:

...He [Ahura Mazda] who is allied with good thinking [Vohu Manah] and the good companion of sunlike truth: We have chosen your good and virtuous piety. It shall be Ours.⁷⁶

The Wise One [Ahura Mazda] who is the Mightiest Lord, and piety, and truth ... and good thinking [Vohu Manah], and (good) rule - listen to me...⁷⁷

And, O Thou who art the most beneficent Ahura Mazda! [A]nd [...], the Good Mind [Vohu Manah], and the Sovereign Power! hear me all. What is ... Your Kingdom, O Mazda? What are Your riches? that I may become Your own in my actions with the Righteous Order [Asha].⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Yasna XXXII:II, Trans. S. Insler.

⁷⁷ Yasna XXXIII:XI, Trans. S. Insler.

⁷⁸ Yasna XXXIII:XI, XXXIV:V, Trans. L. Mills. Asha corresponds to the Vedic term *rta* which is opposed to the negative word *anrta*, which is associated with Vedic *druh* (Avestan *druj*), falsehood.

Asha, as it is commonly pronounced now, most probably was pronounced by early Indo-Iranians as *arta* or *areta*. It is demonstrably an Indo-Iranian word and as a significant religious concept is found in both the Rg-Veda and the Avesta. In the Gathas, it is generally written as *asha*, while in the Old Persian inscriptions it is used as *arta*, but in the Pahlavi texts both the *asha* and the *arta* forms are used. It is frequently used in the Gathas and means Truth or Righteousness: "O Ahura Mazda, ...I beheld Thee with my (enlightened) eyes as the veritable maker of our Righteousness [Asha]" (Yasna XXXI:VIII, Trans. L. Mills). *Ashavan* is the derivative of Asha and forms the epithet of the person who possesses

[Spenta Mainyu] ...) ⁸³

The identification of Spenta Mainyu with the power of Ahura Mazda is evident in another Gathic passage:

..., Wise One [Ahura Mazda], ...by reason of Thy most virtuous spirit [Spenta Mainyu], grant me Thou to me immortality and completeness, those two enduring forces which are to be praised with good thinking [Vohu Manah]. ⁸⁴

Furthermore, in the Gathas, Zarathushtra speaks of Ahura Mazda as being the "Father" of Spenta Mainyu. This expression occurs in the context of Yasna XLVII:III:

Thou are the virtuous Father of this spirit [Spenta Mainyu], the spirit who fashioned the joy-bringing cow [Good Mind or Good vision]. ⁸⁵

This may mean that there is a close affinity of character and purpose between Ahura Mazda and Spenta Mainyu, or even that they are one and the same. In fact, some Gathic passages explicitly suggest that Spenta Mainyu is a synonym for Ahura Mazda:

O Wise One, thou who, as the Most Holy Spirit [Spenta Mainyu]... ⁸⁶

Finally, in Yasna XXX:III-V (see pg. 54), when Zarathushtra is describing the two opposite ways of thinking,

⁸³ Yasna XLVII:III, Trans. L. Mills.

⁸⁴ Yasna LI:VII, Trans. S. Insler.

⁸⁵ Yasna XLVII:III, Trans. S. Insler.

⁸⁶ Yasna LI:VII, Trans. J. Duchesne-Guillemin.

speaking, and acting associated with the good and evil spirits (Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu), he clearly states that humans are caught in the centre of a struggle where their choice is a critical factor, and their ultimate purpose is the defeat of Angra Mainyu, that is to say, the triumph of Ahura Mazda.

To conclude this chapter, the words Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu appear in the Gathas both as common nouns and as the proper names of Ahura Mazda, signifying the "Good or Virtuous Mind." There is some evidence in the Gathas, moreover, to suggest that the characters of Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu are deeply linked with that of Ahura Mazda. In the Gathas, Ahura Mazda, Vohu Manah, and Spenta Mainyu become closely associated with each other, which seem to share the same meaning in Zarathushtra's battle against the forces of evil (Angra Mainyu). Thus the epithets truth, virtuous, piety, lord, etc., which Zarathushtra gives to both Ahura Mazda and Vohu Manah qualify them to correspond to the same thing. It seems that the similarity between them reflects the same goal for which Zarathushtra was in search, the attainment of Spenta Mainyu.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ZARATHUSHTRA'S CONCEPT OF AHURA MAZDA

In Chapter V, we have seen how the concept of Ahura Mazda, its nature and origin, have been approached from several points of view. Scholars like A. V. W. Jackson, M. N. Dhalla, and W. W. Malandra interpret Ahura Mazda as the Supreme Divinity, who exists as an independent Being outside the human mind. Wider studies on the character of Ahura Mazda have caused some other scholars to consider the question whether Ahura Mazda was already worshipped in the pre-Gathic pantheon, or if Zarathushtra exalted Ahura Mazda over another Iranian deity. For instance, J.H. Moulton and Mary Boyce have held the opinion that Ahura Mazda is a divinity that has an affinity with Mithra, who belongs to an older generation of Iranian gods. The concept of Vohu Manah has also been interpreted by these scholars as an archangel who is independent from Ahura Mazda and visits the human mind in order to unite wo/man to "God" (Ahura Mazda), and, so to speak, activates the Asha (righteousness) in her or him.

In Chapter VI, a discussion on the terminological affinity of Ahura Mazda with Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu was presented. The similarity of Ahura Mazda, Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu was shown by looking at some Gathic passages. I established that Ahura Mazda's meaning is very similar to that of Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu, and they

are very often linked to each other in the Gathas. In fact, they seem to be the same thing. In other words, neither Vohu Manah nor Spenta Manah is to be understood as an independent concept but rather as other names for Ahura Mazda.

In this chapter, through an examination of the Gathic texts, I will argue that Ahura Mazda may have been understood by Zarathushtra as a human potentiality that can be achieved through the good thoughts, good words and good deeds of the individual. I will discuss how Zarathushtra in his Gathas emphasizes that humans must have both free choice and mental empowerment in order to ensure their victory over the forces of evil. The mental strength of which Zarathushtra speaks in his Gathas is termed Ahura Mazda:

A person shall bring to realization the best for His most virtuous spirit with his tongue, through words stemming from good thinking [Vohu Manah], and with his hands, through (every) act of piety, according to the single understanding: "The Wise One [Ahura Mazda] is Lord through such actions stemming from good spirit" [Spenta Mainyu].⁸⁷

For the purpose of this thesis, this Gathic passage has a great deal to offer us as we seek to expand our understanding of Ahura Mazda. It takes on a particular meaning in the light of our inquiry into the nature of Ahura Mazda, as it leads us to the point where we are able to learn how the concept of Ahura Mazda is experienced and reflected upon in

⁸⁷ Yasna XLVII:II, XLV:V, Trans. S. Insler.

the Gathas.

It would seem possible that for Zarathushtra Ahura Mazda meant something within humans which can guide all their thoughts and actions, ("may that man reach ... the one who would instruct us to the straight paths ...").⁸⁸

Zarathushtra might have thought of Ahura Mazda as the power of good thinking for all human beings which represents something that in principle is attainable by the individual. The very first page of the Gathas gives us a significant instance to support this definition:

Give O truth, this reward, namely the
attainment of good thinking [Vohu Manah]
... to Vishtaspa and to me.⁸⁹

In another Gathic text Ahura Mazda is identified as peculiarly the inspirer of life and energy, thus:

Through the mind, O Wise One [Ahura
Mazda], have I known thee as the father
of the Good Mind [Vohu Manah], [w]hen I
perceived thee with mine eyes as the
true creator of Righteousness [Asha],
[a]s the Lord in the deeds of exis-
tence.⁹⁰

Ahura Mazda, according to Zarathushtra's address in a Gathic passage is something which is created in the human mind "I shall speak of those things which are borne in

⁸⁸ Yasna XLIII:III, Trans. S. Insler.

⁸⁹ Yasna XXVIII:VII, Trans. S. Insler.

⁹⁰ Yasna XXXI:VIII, Trans. J. Duchesne-Guillemin.

mind....⁹¹ Ahura Mazda is to be a goal that can be achieved by the individual through her/his own decisive exercises of good thinking:

Yes, I have already realized Thee to be virtuous, Wise One [Ahura Mazda], when [you] attended me with good thinking, in order that the goals of my wish be known ...⁹²

In Yasna XLIII:III (which was partially quoted above), Ahura Mazda is described as a better, or even the highest, and the most joyful of all goals:

And may that man reach what is better than good, namely, the one [Ahura Mazda] who would instruct us to the straight paths ..., to the true heights where the Lord dwells⁹³

In the Gathas, Ahura Mazda is characterized as a human power that every person can pursue in her/his individual actions. In his own language, Zarathushtra describes these actions as *humata*, *kukta*, *kvarshta*, to be translated as 'good thought,' 'good word,' and 'good deed.' And one realizes Ahura Mazda through one's own thought, speech, and acts. There are many passages in the Gathas which reflect the notion of Ahura Mazda in the realm of *manah*, *uxta* and *syaoθna* - 'thinking,' 'speaking,' and 'acting:'

⁹¹ Yasna XXX:I, Trans. S. Insler.

⁹² Yasna XLIII:XIII, Trans. S. Insler.

⁹³ Trans. S. Insler.

...Let [us] join with you with [our]
ears. (For) Thou art the Lord by reason
of Thy tongue (which is) in harmony with
truth and by reason of Thy words
stemming from good thinking [Vohu
Manah]...⁹⁴

...for now with (mine) eye, I
see Him clearly, Lord of the
good spirit [Spenta Mainyu],
of word, and action, I knowing
through my Righteousness Him
who is Ahura Mazda.⁹⁵

...The Wise One [Ahura Mazda]
is Lord through piety.⁹⁶

...The Wise One [Ahura Mazda]
is the father of truth.⁹⁷

There are many more descriptions for Ahura Mazda in the Gathas: Ahura Mazda is the spirit, insight, or imagination, ("Thou shalt give, through the heat of Thy truth-strong fire").⁹⁸ Ahura Mazda enables the person to put her/his individual power to its maximum use, ("[m]ay truth be embodied and strong with breath. May there be piety under the rule of ["Him"] who has the appearance of the sun").⁹⁹ People may thus gain continual superiority over their evil side, whose machinations are continually threatening their wealth of forethought, ("even the Kavis

⁹⁴ Yasna LIII:III, Trans. S. Insler.

⁹⁵ Yasna XLV:VIII, Trans. L. Mills.

⁹⁶ Yasna XLVII:I, Trans. S. Insler.

⁹⁷ Yasna XLVII:II, Trans. S. Insler.

⁹⁸ Yasna XLIII:IV, Trans. S. Insler.

⁹⁹ Yasna XLIII:XVI, Trans. S. Insler.

have continually fixed their intentions on capturing and plundering the riches of this world").¹⁰⁰ Ahura Mazda is also described as wisdom which can provide the individual with a matchless superior power, ("I therefore wish enduring strength to come").¹⁰¹ And this superior power can be gained by enacting the best mind, deed and word. In other words, the "enduring strength" of Ahura Mazda is reached only through an effective attainment of these uppermost qualities within the individual. Zarathushtra thus addresses Ahura Mazda to rise to this need, and thereby repeats his continuous appeal for the attainment of good thinking and powerful might which occupy the following Gathic text:

Rise up to me, Lord [Ahura Mazda]. Along with Thy most virtuous spirit, Wise One, receive force through (our) piety, strength through (every) good requital, powerful might through truth, protection through (our) good thinking [Vohu Manah].¹⁰²

Ahura Mazda and the notion of Evil

For the further development of Zarathushtra's concept of Ahura Mazda we must follow up the concept of Evil whom the Gathas describe as *aka* or *Angra Mainyu*. If we cannot

¹⁰⁰ Yasna XXXII:XIV, Trans. S. Insler.

¹⁰¹ Yasna XLIII:I, Trans. S. Insler.

¹⁰² Yasna XXXIII:XII, Trans. S. Insler.

adequately understand Zarathushtra's doctrine of Evil, we cannot help reading the Gathas with some misunderstanding. The concept of Evil in the Gathas is as significant as that of Ahura Mazda. In other words, Zarathushtra's view of Ahura Mazda is closely linked with his explanation of the nature of Evil, a subject he deals with extensively in the Gathas, particularly in Yasnas XXX and XLV. Here Zarathushtra explains the origin of evil in full, using as illustration, the twin *mainyu* (*ta mainyu*) as two mentalities. Zarathushtra describes these two mentalities as *vahyo* the "better" and *akem* "the bad." In these Yasnas, the two mentalities represent the condition of good and evil in the human mind. It seems clear that they are not defined outside the functions of the human mind and the moral choice of the individual. Evil as Zarathushtra describes, is one of the two aspects of human mentality and not an external, self created entity. Ahura Mazda, the good or progressive spirit guides the individual towards truth and good thought. *Aka* or *Angra Mainyu*, the bad or retrogressive mentality is evil not only to the individual's self, but also to others and to the environment one lives in:

The gods did not at all choose correctly between these two, since the deceptive one approached them as they were deliberating. Since they chose the worst thought, they then rushed into fury, with which they have afflicted the world

and mankind. ¹⁰³

Zarathushtra's address in Yasna XXX, where he is clearly intending to sum up his fundamental doctrines of the twin spirits may successfully enrich our understanding of this subject:

Yes, these are two fundamental spirits, twins which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action, they are two: the good and the bad. And between these two, the beneficent have correctly chosen, not the maleficent. ¹⁰⁴

Another reference to the twin mentality is recorded in Yasna XLV:

Yes, I shall speak of the two fundamental spirits of existence, of which the virtuous one would have thus spoken to the evil one: "Neither our thoughts nor teachings nor intentions, neither our preferences nor words, neither our actions nor conceptions nor our souls are in accord." ¹⁰⁵

Here, Zarathushtra insists that evil is not simply a "negation" of good, however, the battle between good and evil is in process and will continue till one side has overcome the other. This heavily depends on the collective thoughts of the individual who is free to choose either

¹⁰³ Yasna XXX:VI, Trans. S. Insler.

¹⁰⁴ Yasna XXX:III, Trans. S. Insler.

¹⁰⁵ Yasna XLV:II, Trans. S. Insler.

side. Her or his choice of either good or evil will enhance the strength of the side chosen, and therefore, at the end of this battle the outcome for the good will take place within the human individual with the complete triumph of goodness, that is to say, the attainment of Vohu Manah for those who have preserved the good cause. On the other side, the effect on those who chose evil will be so very far from good.

The Importance of Choice in the Gathas

The individual's free will to choose between Good and Evil is the hinge upon which the entire Gathic philosophy turns. The choice of the individual is the supreme base for the attainment of good thinking:

... one raises his voice in
accord with both his heart and
his mind, be he false-
speaking, be he knowing or
unknowing. (But) in due
course, piety [Vohu Manah]
shall come to terms with one's
spirit where there has been
opposition.¹⁰⁶

In the Gathas, when Zarathushtra emphasizes the gap that yawns between Good and Evil which exist in this very universe as inevitably as convex and concave in the same curve, he is clearly making a fundamental point, that Good and Evil have no concord; the gulf between them cannot be bridged and compromise is not possible, and the individual

¹⁰⁶ Yasna XXXI:XII, Trans. S. Insler.

must make her/his choice knowing that her/his happiness depends upon it.

The importance of choice in the Gathas is crystal clear. Choice plays absolutely decisive role in the Gathic philosophy, especially to the point of entering the fundamental stage of human life:

Hear with your ears that which
is the sovereign good; with a
clear mind look upon the two
sides. Between which each man
must choose for himself,
watchful beforehand that the
great test may be accomplished
in our favour.¹⁰⁷

It is through choice, and only through the inescapable choice that one can bring her/himself to the point of the final test, whose "result may be seen in lights."¹⁰⁸

This radical valuing of choice in the Gathas is of fundamental importance to the teachings of Zarathushtra. Continual practice of good thought, good word and good deed is the best of choices humans can make, for it holds the key to one's advancement towards good thinking and therefore her/his own happiness. When the righteous person thinks in a good way, talks in a good way and acts in a good way, s/he not only, through these wise exercises, chooses the best weapons against the mal-functioning Angra Mainyu, fighting the evil parts of her/his existence, but also can

¹⁰⁷ Yasna XXX:II, Trans. J. Duchesne-Guillemin.

¹⁰⁸ Yasna XXX:I, Trans. L. Mills.

trust in her/his power to overcome evil in her/himself and in the environment in which s/he lives. Consequently, this person brings material and spiritual happiness to her/himself, thereby helping her/himself to realize Ahura Mazda.

Ahura Mazda is Vohu Manah within the individual that is in battle against Angra Mainyu, the evil spirit. And any one in this universe who acts under the motivation of his own good thinking, by reason of his understanding, his words and his actions, highlights his human dignity and gives real meaning to his life. Such a person

...in this very way, has opposed the guilty gods and... by reason of this virtuous conception, is an ally, a brother, or a father (of ...), Wise Lord....¹⁰⁹

Zarathushtra's idea of guilty gods becomes the basis for another Gathic hymn in which he charges the false gods for defrauding wo/man of happiness and good thinking:

In this way ye have deceived mankind out of the good way of life and immortality [happiness], much as ye have deceived yourselves, the gods, (of it) by such evil thinking, and the evil spirit himself. Your action is allied with evil words, by reason of which the Ruler has marked the deceitful person.¹¹⁰

Having thoughtfully regarded his concept of Ahura

¹⁰⁹ Yasna XLV:XII, Trans. S. Insler.

¹¹⁰ Yasna XXXII:V, Trans. S. Insler.

Mazda, Zarathushtra remarkably expressed a respect, which is higher than an ordinary respect for things or beings, that is a respect for the power he had attained: "...We have said that ye are above all others, be they fierce gods or mortals."¹¹¹

The Idea of Good Thinking and Truth in the Gathas

The idea of good thinking and truth, according to the Gathas, exists in this very universe, but the evil forces have made it difficult for humans to bring these principles to realization. In the Gathas, Zarathushtra depicts Ahura Mazda as the creator of everything including good and truth, and for this he has a purpose, and that is, Ahura Mazda is, in fact, the realization of truth, it is the awakening of good thought in Zarathushtra himself:

...as the first did I conceive of Thee,
O Ahura Mazda! as the one to be adored
with the mind in the creation, as the
Father of the Good Mind [Vohu Manah]
within us, when I beheld Thee with my
(enlightened) eyes as the veritable
maker of our Righteousness, as the Lord
of the actions of life!¹¹²

"A person shall bring to realization the
best for His most virtuous spirit [Ahura
Mazda] with his tongue, through words
stemming from good thinking [Vohu
Manah], and with his hands, through
(every) act of piety, according to the
single understanding: the Wise One

¹¹¹ Yasna XXXIV:V, Trans. S. Insler.

¹¹² Yasna XXXI:VIII, Trans. L. Mills.

[Ahura Mazda] is the Father of truth."¹¹³

Zarathushtra came to understand that the creation of good thinking and truth is possible and human destiny depends upon the establishment of these good principles. In the Gathas this is described in an expressive way:

...(I wish) for this person [Zarathushtra] the best of all things, that by which a man might place a person of good purpose in happiness: to be understanding all his days, with the joy of long life, understanding through Thy most virtuous spirit, Wise One, by reason of which Thou didst create the wondrous powers of good thinking [Vohu Manah] allied with truth.¹¹⁴

In the Gathas, Ahura Mazda represents the genius of good thought, the highest mental empowerment a human being is capable of attaining. Good thoughts, good words, and good actions make wo/man ashvant, righteous, and lead her/him to the place of honour:

...The person who is very good to a truthful man, be he allied by family, or a member of his community, or allied by clan, Lord, or be he someone who continues to serve the cow with zeal, such a person shall be on the pasture of truth and good thinking.¹¹⁵

Closely akin is the thought of another Gathic text where

¹¹³ Yasna XLVII:II, Trans. S. Insler.

¹¹⁴ Yasna XLIII:II, Trans. S. Insler.

¹¹⁵ Yasna XXXIII:III, Trans. S. Insler.

Zarathushtra's emphasize is again on the practice of truth for realization of Ahura Mazda:

This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord,
Someone like Thee, Wise One, should
declare to me, his friend, how reverence
for your kind is to be from the reverent
person, and how friendly associations
with truth are to be established by us,
in order that it [realization of Ahura
Mazda] shall come to us together with
good thinking.¹¹⁶

To summarize this chapter, from what we have seen in the Gathic passages, it seems clear that the word Ahura Mazda is used by Zarathushtra in such a way that it is not always possible to say that Ahura Mazda is the proper name of a divinity. In the Gathas, Ahura Mazda is to be understood as a mental phenomenon, a dynamic force, a human potentiality whose attainment can guide the individual in her/his thoughts, words and deeds. In his Gathas, Zarathushtra insists that humans are engaged in the battle between Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu, Good and Evil Spirits, and this battle will continue till one side has defeated the other. This primarily depends on the individual who is free to choose either side. In the Gathas, the most important meanings which are given to Ahura Mazda are: Ahura Mazda as Wisdom; Ahura Mazda as Vohu Manah (Good Mind); and Ahura Mazda as Spenta Mainyu (Good Thought) within the individual.

¹¹⁶ Yasna XLIV:I, Trans. S. Insler.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The period when the Aryan settlers came to Iran is not certain, as we have seen in chapter two of this thesis. In the Avestan books, we find these Indo-European settlers already placed in Iran, actively following agricultural pursuits, and practicing the beliefs that they had brought with them from their ancient homeland. From our sources (Avestan texts and Greek materials) we learn that ancient Iranians were mainly nature worshippers whose religious practices were based on animal sacrifices, and a respect for the elements of nature. Our sources also indicate that Iranian people paid homage to gods known as Vayu, Mithra and Zurvan.

In Herodotus' writings we are introduced to an Iranian priestly class called the Magi. In the Magi system we find a form of polytheism which is similar to that of the earliest Indo-Aryans's hymn-cycle, the Rg.Veda. In the Avestan books (namely the Gathas), we find another priestly class that Zarathushtra recognizes as *karpans*.

There is a diversity of opinion among scholars with reference to Zarathushtra's exact time. His exact place of birth is also a debated matter among scholars.

Zarathushtra's teachings have come to us in the form of hymns, the Gathas, which are the oldest part of the Avesta, and written in an archaic form of language. The Gathas are

composed in five different meters of 'Vedic' form and divided into five sections. They are considered to be the work of Zarathushtra himself, though there is some scholarly disagreement on what Zarathushtra composed.

The contents of the Gathas are varied: they are ethical, social, autobiographical as well as philosophical. Nevertheless, the main theme of the Gathas is concerned with describing the nature and the outcome of the choice between Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu, the Good and Evil Spirits. For Zarathushtra, the Gathas are the mediator between his reasoning of his own wisdom and the practical existence of the universe. In his Gathas, Zarathushtra asks questions that show how he began his quest of wisdom and how he arrived at it. Each of Zarathushtra's questions was indeed an answer in itself, an answer that led to another answer. In his Gathas Zarathushtra is led by his own good thinking to a dynamic force which he calls Ahura Mazda, Lord Wise; Mazda Ahura, Wise Lord

Based on certain Gathic passages, scholars in Indo-European studies have offered different interpretations for Zarathushtra's concept of Ahura Mazda. But they seem to agree that Ahura Mazda is a "Divine Power" hence "God," that is comprehended and experienced by Zarathushtra in the Gathas.

Ahura Mazda is used, however, in a different fashion in many Gathic texts; for sometimes it seems to represent a

personal power within the individual through the way in which s/he thinks, speaks or acts. For Zarathushtra, Thought, Word, and Deed can define and explain wo/man's central role in her/his own making. In his Gathas, Zarathushtra insists that humans are the only beings with the power that can guide them in their practical existence, and Good Thought, Good Word, and Good Deed are the central elements which can bring that power to the individual. Zarathushtra emphasizes human responsibility for the attainment of that power. Humans should not be, according to Zarathushtra, subject to the whims of gods who can abolish their good human intentions by their capricious impulse. The world is an arena in which Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu are good and evil forces, and Zarathushtra tries to teach mankind and enlist its efforts for the good.

Ahura Mazda may not be the "Divine Being" as understood by some. But it may represent the Power, the Insight, the Wisdom, and the Vohu Manah or Spenta Mainyu that can be borne within the human mind, and as such these uppermost qualities can, not only provide the individual the highest ability to think, to act and to speak good, but also can lead one to the good or progressive mentality, to the realization of truth, and finally to the awakening of Good Thought in the individual.

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