

# FARROKH VAJIFADAR'S VIEWS ON ZOROASTRIAN DUALISM (HAMAZOR, ISSUE 3, 2014, pp. 13-16)

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A careful reading of Darius I's ("the Great") cuneiform Old Persian - "Aryan" - narratives, attributes his successes and just about everything else to Ahuramazda whose name is invoked some thirty-three times in specific connexions. There is no attributed *fravashi* or external protective agency in Darius' great inscriptions; it is solely Ahuramazda, the *baga vazraka*, "great god" (DNRm A and B introduction).

Zarathushtra lauded Mazda, "Wisdom; Wise One", as Ahura, "Master", without appellative of *baga*, the generic term for "god". In his hymns of praise to Mazda the concept of Master of Wisdom, or better, Masterly Wisdom, occurs in almost all the verses of his sixteen sacred chants – the Gathas. The two elements are most often separated for precise effect in their various contexts such that they never become stereotypes as "Ahura Mazda".

This precision realizes the character and purpose of Mazda as sole Creator of *everything*. (Ys. 44.7). His creation extends from the universal Macrocosmos to the microcosmos that is this world with all its creatures. Zarathushtra taught the nature and virtues of Mazda at abstract and actuality levels using metaphors and scenes from the everyday lives of the pastoralist and the agriculturalist – else his teachings would have remained uncomprehended, ineffective and largely forgotten. This is why, in the remarkable poem on the "Plaint of the Kine-soul" (Yasna 29) - "kine signifies all domesticated animals on which ancient economies depended, he stressed that the Mazdaic revelation is to be transmitted as both *pairi-chithit* and *aipi-chithit* – the exoteric and esoteric forms – to be preserved, as *zahir* and *batin*, some two thousand years later by the emergent Sufi schools within Islam.

It is noteworthy that Mazda is always lauded in company with his integral agencies *Vohu mana*, "Good Mind", to which Zarathushtra owes his inspiration (Ys. 43.7, 9, 11, 13, 15), and *Asha*, "Truth; Rightness, Order; Justice". The three are specified in Ys. 28.3, and especially Yss. 28.9 and 33.7 where they are designated as the "best (*vahishta*) ones". They are together seen to best effect in the key-note *Yahta ahu vairyo* prayer (Ys. 27.13); the *Ashem vohu* I Ys. 27.14 is a

laudation of Truth where *asha* is qualified as *vohu*, “good”, and *vahishta*, “best”.

Single-minded as Zarathushtra was in his fervent projection of Mazda as over-arching Wisdom, one further notes the absence besides *baga*, of *yazata/yazad/ized*, “worshipful being”; *fravarti/fravashi*, those external protective elements; and the term for “immortal”, *amesha*.

In the Gathas, *ahura* has a triple function: firstly, to laud Mazda, secondly, to qualify the attributes of Mazda, as *mazdaoscha ahuraonho* (Yss. 30.9; 31.4); lastly, as *ahuram ashavanam*, “the truth-possessing *ahura*” to describe the right-living pastoralist of Ys.31.10.

Apart from the fundamental Triad of *Mazda*, *Vohu Mana*, and *Asha*, there exist in the Gathas other abstract powers, all mutually interactive, but always in marked dependence on Mazda who is poetically called their “Father”: of *Vohu mana* (Ys. 45.4); of *Asha* (Ys.47.2); of *Armaiti* (Ys. 45.4). All, one is informed, are *thought into existence* as eternal attributes of Mazda himself.

Seven, including the “Best Ones” triad, are *Khshathra*, “sovereign power/control”, qualified with *vairya*, “desirable”; *Armaiti*, “Right-mindedness (man’s respectful attitude towards Mazda)”, regarded as *spenta*, “bountiful, proactive, incremental”, with *Haurvatat* and *Ameretat*, usually twinned as “Integrity” and “Undyingness”.

It is noted in passing that Zarathushtra uses expressions for Mazda which some have seen as anthropomorphic, quite forgetting that the entirety of Gathic entities are abstractions and not objects. Whilst allusions to Mazda's eyes, mouth, tongue and hands are seen such perceptions need to be evaluated against examples from modern English as “the *eye* of a storm”, the *mouth* of a river”, and *tongue* of land”, “a *hand* of bananas”, etc. They are employed in contemporary usage for fullness of expression.

The six Mazdaic entities are together thrice utilized to project Zarathushtra's Mazdaic revelation. They are assembled in Yss. 34.11, 45.10, and 47.1, as parts of the divine “personality itself, being of vital importance to Zarathustra’s holistic conception of Mazda the Ahura. (Later the six were to be promoted under the corporate name of *Amesha Spentas*, an expression firstly encountered in the *Yasna Haptanhaiti* (Yss: 35.1; 39.3).

*Vohu mana*, *Asha* and *Khshathra* are grammatically neuter, later misconstrued as male(!); *Armaiti*, *Haurvat*, and *Ameretat* are grammatically feminine – there is no distinction of nature, but of character. Among the commonly reckoned four sacred prayers (Yss. 27.13,14,15; 54.1) is the *Yenghe hatam* which offers, “We venerate those

male ones and female ones”: the six are only *grammatically* endowed with sex. It was noted in the introduction of Diogenese’ “Lives of the Philosophers” that (The early) magi condemn the use of images, and especially the error of those who attribute to the divinities a difference of sex”.

In a general way, the first three could be regarded as what Mazda is – his operational modes; the latter three are what Mazda gives – his gifts to mankind. Their Gathic Avestan names are not all of Zarathushtra’s invention – their originals come from Vedic equivalents. Thus, *asha-rta*, *khshathra-ksatra*, *armaiti-aramati*, *amaratat-amrta*, *haurvatat-sarvatat*. *Vohu-mana* is the Sage’s original construct, as of course is Mazda the Ahura.

Indeed, the spiritual powers became so intimately linked with the physical creations that the Gathas too make some early connexions: *Vohu mana* with the Kine (Ys. 29, which must be regarded as the First Animal Rights Charter!); *Armaiti* and the earth (Yss. 47.3; 48.11); *Hauvatat* and *Ameretat* with the Waters and Plants (Ys.51.7).

But their numbers were never fixed, for *Sraosha/Srosh*, the genius of Harkening as well as *Geush urva*, “the Soul of the Kine” (of all the Animal Kingdom – as in Ys. 29) were later to be added. After the Parsi ancestors’ immigration on to the subcontinent, their number rose to 33, under Hindu influence (cf. The Pazand *Nirang-i-ab-i zor*). The *Visparad* entertains myriads!

The real objection to the gathering up of the spiritual abstractions integral to Mazda (as in the Gathas) under the corporate name of *Amesha spentas*, “Bountiful Immortals”, is that they become detached from Mazda to whom solely all proper reverence is due and assume a separate existence (f.ex. Ys. 16.3) where they lose all vitality and might have never have mattered at all! One sees expressions as “O Mazda and all *Amesha spentas*”. It has been pointed out with concision and all desirable clarity by Ilya Gershevitch (1986 *Humbach Festschrift*) who declared: “The inseparability of his severalness from his singleness...as if Mazdah were a mere appendix to what in fact was He himself”! Point taken?

Good and Evil are the respective outcomes from the conflict of the “twin” *mainyus* behavioural influences – of Truth and Deceit (cf. Yss. 30.3-6; 45.2), and they are both manifested on earth. Here it must be emphasized that the charge levelled at Zoroastrianism of being “dualist”, or worse, ditheist, is solely due to a distortion of a casual epithet (Ys. 44.12) for the hostile influence *angro mainyete* – pointing to damnation for the deceitful. There is no *angra mainyu* as some worship-worthy force ranged against or limiting Mazda the Ahura! Such perverse entity would have to be omnipresent, omniscient, and eternal,

and there is no indication in the Gathas that this is even remotely suggested. The original Gathic position was always that Mazda stood above and beyond the *mainyus*' conflict.

Thus, the Gathas are agreed as monotheistic; the *Videvdat/Vendidad* as dualistic or better, ditheistic, the *Yashts* as polytheistic or even henotheistic; and the *Yasna* as pantheistic in its non-Gathic parts.

Zarathushtra expresses Mazda as a monad in his Gathas - "monad" being understood as a fundamental, autonomous (Ys. 43.1, 8) metaphysical entity. The question of his immanence is settled if one agrees the short definition of *panentheism* as "god in everything: the cosmos exists within Mazda, who in turn "pervades" or is "in" the cosmos (Ys. 44.3-5). In Ys. 34.5 the Sage acknowledges the full superiority of his sole divinity Mazda and none other (Ys. 34.7). In Ys. 34.6 he approaches all the eternal entities integral to Mazda's "personality", the *mazdaoscha ahuranho* of Yss. 30.9 and 31.4 with reverence and praise.