

An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra – Good & Evil.¹

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Unlike the Gathas, Zoroastrianism, in its late fully institutionalized form, is definitely a dualistic religion. There is an all-out cosmic war between the forces of good and evil. On one side, one sees Ohrmazd, the God of Good and Light; six Amashaspands, Holy immortals or His archangel-type associates; numerous Yazads, Adorables, or angel-type assistants; innumerable Fravahrs, Guardian Spirits; and of course, the host of ahnavs, the righteous people. On the opposite side one finds Ahreman, Lord of Evil and Darkness, the Devil; six archfiends; numerous Devs, fiends; and of course, the horde of dravands, the evil people (nothing however is specified to oppose the Fravahrs. They do not, somehow, seem to have their corresponding adversaries).² The war between Ohrmazd and Ahreman is constant and continuous, and the fortunes of the participants fluctuate in a see-saw fashion, sometimes with the good having an upper hand, and sometimes the evil. Both sides have their winning and losing battles, but in the end the omniscient-but-not-omnipotent Ohrmazd and his warriors will win the war. The battles are fought, of course, on age-old chivalrous principles. Ohrmazd combats Ahreman, each specified Amashaspand battles with his or her adversary in the hexad of archfiends, and so on. Each good entity shall have his or her adversary downed on the day of victory. Evil and Darkness shall be vanquished, and Good and “the Endless Lights” shall prevail forever.³

Although the real culprit is *Ahreman*, man is also punished for choosing to fall with the fiend. This constitutes a semiescapist theory and as we shall see, stands in sharp contrast to the logical coherence of the Gathas. It is semi-escapist to the extent that it puts the blame of one's wrong acts on a supernatural entity and relieves mankind of the direct responsibility for their actions.

Zarathushtra's Answer.

Of those who do not resort to escapism, Zarathushtra stands first and foremost. The Gathas do not provide any answer that would place the blame on

1 First published in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra*, editor: Dina G. McIntyre, March 1990, p. 7.

2 If one thinks of Fravahrs as a fundamental element of later Zoroastrianism, this oversight itself suggests a hole in the dualistic theory.

3 Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, New York, 1938, pp. 257, 384.

any entity other than human beings. Contrary to the cosmic dualism of later Zoroastrianism and the chaos and illogic ensuing from it, the Gathas find the entire universe quite in order and with an unmatched logic of its own. No war. No struggle. The universe, fashioned and promoted by Mazda, is good. The Gathas, again, do not speak of any natural disasters. “The living world (*gam*), and the waters (*apas-cha*), and the vegetables (*urvaraos-cha*)” (Y51.7) are on their path to wholeness (*haurvatat*) if human beings respect the universal law of righteousness (*asha*). The only deduction, a very logical one, that a studious Gathist can make is that Mazda Ahura, literally the “Supreme-Intellect Being,” the “most progressive” (*spentotema*), who “came first...in the House of Song,” (Y51.15), has fashioned the living world through the progressive mentality (*spenta mainyu*) and placed it on the path of progress toward wholeness and immortality, (Y43 and 44, Y45.5, Y51.7, 15) and therefore the living world, fashioned in its infancy, is growing and going on well, despite the pangs of growth, on the path of *asha* towards the final goal.⁴ Changes – earthquakes, floods, the interdependence of living creatures from the diminutive virus to the giant whale, and other so-called “acts of God” or doings of the Devil -- on and in this evolving earth are seen as the natural process of unfolding of the law of *asha*. Since *Ahura Mazda* in the Gathas and in the later Avesta and the good order in the universe fashioned and being fashioned by *Mazda's spenta mainyu* lie outside the scope of this particular essay, we are unable to expand on this topic.

Before we review the Gathas for good and evil, let us quote from the essay “*Spenta Mainyu*” in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra*, No. 3, December 1989), that (a) “*spenta mainyu*” [represents] the subtle divine faculty of the continuous creation and expansion plan of *Ahura Mazda* and (b) that “the Gathas do not mention *anhra mainyu* at all. In other words, *anhra mainyu* does not exist as a compound word, a formalized term, in any of the texts in the Gathic dialect. The dualism of “Good and Evil”, highly dramatized in the later Avesta, is simply not related to the divine *spenta mainyu*.” There is, in fact, no place for *anhra mainyu* in the Gathic logic.⁵

Gathic Dualism.

The question then arises: Is there any dualism in the Gathas? The answer is a definite **Yes**. Zarathushtra places utmost emphasis on the subject. He asks his listeners to hear the best, to ponder with an illuminated mind so as to choose between good and evil (Y30.2). He says in his first discourse on this important

4 The late Dr. Irach J.S. Taraporewala puts it thus: “This is a remarkable idea that Ahura Mazda himself is advancing at the head of all His Creation.” *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, Bombay, 1951, p. 805.

5 *Angra* which means retarding and evil, is Gathic, and *anhra* or *anghra*, always used in combination with *mainyu* is the later Avesta formalized form of it.

subject:

1. The two foremost mentalities, known to be imaginary twins, are the better and the bad in thoughts, words, and deeds. Of these the beneficent choose correctly, but not so the maleficent. (Y30.3).

2. When the two mentalities first got together, they created “life” (*gaya*) and “not-living” (*ajyaiti*). Until the end of existence (*ahu*), the worst mind shall be for the wrongful, and the best mind shall be for the righteous. (Y30.4).

3. Of these two mentalities, the wrongful mentality chose worst actions and the most progressive mentality, steadfast as rock, chose righteousness. Therefore, those who would please the Wise God may do so by choosing true actions. (Y30.5).

4. Between these two, the seekers of false gods did not decide correctly, because delusion came to them in their deliberations. Therefore, they chose the worst mind, rushed in wrath, and afflicted human existence. (Y30.6).

5. To the person who chooses correctly, comes endurance of body and steadfast serenity through strength, good mind, and righteousness. Of these, such a person shall be Yours, because he has come fully out of the fiery test. (Y30.7).

His second discourse, addressed sometime later to an apparently much larger gathering, states:

1. I shall proclaim, hear and listen, you who have come from near and far as seekers. Now, clearly bear these in mind. Let not the evil teachers, the wrongful, with his evil choice and perverted tongue, destroy life for a second time. (Y45.1).

2. I shall proclaim the two foremost mentalities of life. Of these, the more progressive one (*spanya*) told the retarding one (*angra*) thus: Neither our thoughts, nor teachings, nor intellects, nor choices, nor words, nor deeds, nor consciences, nor souls agree. (Y45.2).

Should one read the entire Yasna sections 30, 31, and 45, in other words, all those Gathic passages that expound upon the “two principles” of good and evil, one would realize the fact that the whole problem simply does not exist outside the bounds of human society. There is absolutely no reference to a space outside our earthly environment, the universe, or the entire creation. Furthermore, the Gathas do not state that the two mentalities are engaged in a conflict or war. They only say that the two do not agree in any of their aspects. It is the choosers who are opposed to one another. While one is constructively beneficial, the other is destructively inimical.

Let us look again at the statements and this time concentrate on the words chosen by Zarathushtra to present his doctrine. First he calls his doctrine of “good and evil” as **two principles** (*urvata*) (Y30.II, 31.1, 3). He does not talk

about any of the two opposing entities or forces as expounded by the authorities of the Sasanian days or the scholars of cosmic dualism in our own time. He speaks of “the two principles of prosperity and adversity (*khviti-cha eneiti*) established by the Wise One” (Y30.11), and he speaks about them at length in Yasna 31 and in other stanzas. He uses *vahya*, better (comparative degree), against *aka*, bad (Y30.3). In another instance (Y45.2), he takes *spanya*, more incremental, more progressive (again comparative degree) against *anra*, retarding or hostile. Note that there is no juxtaposition of the term *spenta mainyu* and the later term *anhra mainyu*. Moreover, *anra* is mentioned six times in the Gathas (43.15, 44.12 three times, 45.2, and 48.10), and except for the single instance referenced above, all references are meant for human beings.⁶ Is this not strange? A great exponent such as Zarathushtra comes forward to explain his most precious doctrine and yet he has not coined a standard term for one of the two factors of his doctrine! He uses his coined term *spenta mainyu* related to the Supreme Being fourteen times, and he does not mention at all the term *anhra mainyu*, mentioned by the later Avesta and described at length by the Pahlavi literature as the “adversary” of *spenta mainyu*, *Ahura Mazda* or *Ohrmazd*. The reason is obvious: these two do not and cannot logically stand against each other in the Gathas. There is simply nothing opposed to the “creative mind of *Ahura Mazda*.” The term *mainyu* occurs once more in loose juxtaposition with *aka* (Y32.5) in which Zarathushtra poetically addresses *daevas*, false gods, and says that they have provided the wrongful with power through evil mentality (*aka mainyu*), and evil thoughts, words and deeds. There is no other mention of an evil *mainyu* in the entire Gathic texts. Even if we concede to those who insist that *mainyu* means “spirit” in the Gathas, the realm of the two “spirits” does not go beyond the realm of human beings, and it never extends to the cosmos. But, as already stated, the Gathas call it the doctrine of “two principles” which is what the Gathic dualism really is.

Two other words used by Zarathushtra are very important: life (*gaya*) and not- living (*ajyaiti*).⁷ A person can have his life with all its good potentialities or otherwise, although living, he has no life with a subtle purpose. He is, in fact, a spiritually dead person. Another point to note is that the law of “bad for the bad and a good reward for the good” (Y43.5) will last until the final turn of

6 “One should never try to please wrongful people because they hold the righteous as being totally bad (angreng)” (Y43.15); “Who sides with evil (attgro), and who is evil (angro) himself? Why should I not consider the person who is wrongfully set against Your gains, to be evil (angro)?” (Y44.12). “It is through it [the filthy intoxicant] that the priests and the wicked rulers of the lands form their evil (angraya) intellects.” (Y48.10) See also Taraporewala, *ibid.*, pages 453-455, 499- 502, 685; and Insler, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra*, (Leiden, 1975), pages 65, 71, 93.

7 While *gaya* stands for life, the vital force, *jyaiti* and its variants mean living, way of life (Y31.15, Y32.5, 11-12, 15, Y33.10, Y46.4, 8, Y53.9). Its negative, *ajyaiti* is not “death” but “lack of living.”

creation but a person will “get much bad” for his failure at “the turning point of his life” (Y51.6) and existence, and that this law will “last until the end of existence” (Y30.4) in this living world. We shall elaborate this point later.

The fiery or purifying metal test stands for the ordeal one goes through by choosing good and progressive thoughts, words and deeds as against “wrong [which] is attractive and appears to have advantages” (Y53.6).

Good and Evil.

What is good and what is bad? The Gathas explain it in a very simple form and yet present a sublime doctrine: All that helps the living world to prosper is good, and all that serves to harm it is bad. To be good is to choose adhering to *asha*, the universal law of righteousness, truth and precision. When one does a thing in its proper way, he or she obtains the proper result. *Asha* in action is, therefore, doing the right thing, at the right time, at the right place, for the right reason, and with the right means in order to obtain the right result. It is prudent precision in every thought, word, and deed. Otherwise the result will not be right. It will be wrong. Zarathushtra uses the term *druj*, harmful lie, wrong.

In his great vision, Zarathushtra perceived a highly scientific law working in the universe which he called the law of *asha*. Any deviation from this law is *druj*.⁸ He categorizes human behavior into two: *asha* and *druj*. This is the Gathic dualism. Those who follow *asha* are *ashavan*, righteous, precise, truthful. Those who turn to *druj* are *dregvant*, lying, wrongful, erroneous. The human world is divided into two parties or factions (*rana*) (Y31.3, 19, Y43.12, Y47.6, Y51.9). Zarathushtra’s mission is to eliminate the false belief in supernatural forces and imaginary deities which was so prevalent in his times [they still prevail] and to help men and women to realize that they are God’s

8 The Pahlavi dualistic theory simply cannot be compatible with the law of *asha* because man’s deeds, word and veneration alone further the cause of *asha* and the spiritual progress (Y34.1), and these alone and not an outside agent such as the so-called *Ahremen* are instrumental in determining human destiny. However, one must realize that the Pahlavi literature was written nearly 2,000 years after the Gathas were first sung by Zarathushtra, when knowledge of the Gathic language was almost practically lost to the Pahlavi writers and when there were many other influences including some alien ones working on them at the time. The Pahlavi translation of the Gathic verses hardly comes close to its original meaning. It may very well be that Zarathushtra’s highly philosophical and moralistic message was rather ahead of its times, and people tended to fall back on their earlier ways of thinking and later influences. The abstraction inherent in a moralistic dualism was perhaps hard for the common man to follow, which seems to have led to thinking in concrete terms such as cosmic dualism between Ohrmazd and Ahreman. One therefore, cannot blame the Pahlavi writers for describing the dualism of Zarathushtra as best as they perceived it. But modern philology enables us to come much closer to understanding the Gathic message than the Pahlavi writers ever could. Therefore, it is up to everyone to study the Gathas on his or her own and, as Zarathushtra exhorts, decide for himself or herself with the light of his or her own intellect (Y30.2) whether his dualist teaching is the same as described by later writers.

agents on this earth and that they are made of divine essence which they could realize fully by their good deeds, words and venerations. (Y34.1).

To summarize: The Gathic good and evil is related to the realm of human beings only. It is human mentality that leads to thoughts, word, and deeds. A “better or more progressive” mentality promotes human well-being. An “evil or retarding” mentality distorts it. All those actions that make human society and thereby the entire living world advance mentally and materially are good, and all those deeds that reverse this process are evil. Mental (*manyava*), or to use the current term “spiritual” progress leads one to understand the divine doctrine and to know God. Physical (*astavanti*) or material progress leads to an ever-better living. Both of these intertwined spiritual and material states are to be promoted equally to wholeness. The human society in the Gathas is based on home (*demana*) or family (*khaetu*), the smallest unit; district (*vis*) or community (*verezena*), consisting of districts and their communities; and finally the living world (*go*) comprising of all that exists on this good earth (Y31.16, 18, Y32.1, Y33.3, 4, Y46.1, 4, Y49.7, Y53.4, 54.1). Righteousness begins at home, and keeps working through the ever-expanding network of interconnected districts and lands, finally reaching the entire world.

Consequences.

Man or woman, as an individual, is but a component of the smallest human unit -- family. He or she is free to constantly make a choice between *asha* and *druj*. The consequences, however, are obvious because good or bad acts by an individual ultimately cross his or her personal boundaries and affect the four social units. At a time when most of mankind worshiped supernatural forces and imaginary gods whom Zarathushtra vehemently opposes in the Gathas, Zarathushtra was the first one in the world to emphasize the importance of individual responsibility and free will.

The Gathas make it clear:

1. I realized You, God Wise, to be progressive (*spenta*) when I saw You at the birth of life, and found that You have ordained that actions and words should have consequences: bad for the bad, and a good reward for the good. It shall be so through Your excellence until the final turn of the creation (*dami*) (Y43.5).⁹

2. The Wise God gives, through His sovereignty, much good to him who succeeds for the sake of conviction. But he who does not strengthen it shall get much bad at the turning point of his life (*ahu*) (Y51.6).

9 Here *Mazda* is mentioned as ruling through His excellence until the final turn, which is in direct contrast to the Pahlavi tradition where Ohrmazd and Ahreman are equal until the end of time.

3. Let one tell the wise that evil is for the wrongful and radiant happiness is for him who upholds righteousness. Truly, he who tells this thought-provoking message to the wise, will thereby become happy (Y51.8).

4. You grant happiness to both factions through Your bright fire, Wise One, as well as through the purifying metal test. This is the established principle of existence: Sufferings for the wrongful and blessings for the righteous. (Y51.9).

The Gathas make it explicitly clear that the consequences of man's actions are relevant. A good act enriches the world and mankind, and a bad deed leads to destitution of life. Each action leads to a reaction. The Gathas do not store good actions and bad deeds in two separate stacks, keeping them for the supposed day when the soul faces certain divinities who act as judges on “chinvat pohl” and weigh the two stacks to find which one is heavier so that the deserved reward or punishment is given to the soul. In the Gathas there is no specific day -- the so-called *rastakhiz*, final resurrection — to announce the judgments and finalize the issues. The Gathas make no mention of imaginative consequences of which no one knows anything. They advise us to realize the truth *asha* through *seraousha* — listening to the divine voice within us, through enhancing peace and prosperity in our living world, and through fostering the interdependence between the different elements of nature .

To find out what happens to the soul after its separation from the physical body, one who is imaginatively interested in eschatology, would have to turn to later Avestan texts or better to the Pahlavi scriptures, or of course to the contemporary lores in the Middle East. The Gathas would certainly disappoint him or her unless of course an arbitrary recourse is made to interpretation and imagination.

Soul.¹⁰

The Gathas and their closest supplement *Haptanghaiti* (which we believe was composed by one or more companions of Zarathushtra) give us an altogether new view. The study of all the instances found in the two scriptures shows that men and animals, in fact, the living world have souls. Soul is associated with conscience, intellect, teaching, choice, thoughts, words, and deeds. Soul grows strong through righteousness. It attains “good happiness” by consulting good mind (*vohu manah*) and understanding the reality of life through righteousness. In fact, a progressive man's soul realizes righteousness (*asha*) (Y34.2). Therefore, Zarathushtra in his opening prayer, aspires to please the soul of the living world by his wise and righteous actions in order to usher in a new era and attunes his soul to good mind (Y28.1). His soul turns to divine principles of righteousness and the best mind for help for himself and his

10 This discussion on the Soul has been included in this essay because it is related to the consequences of good and evil.

companions (Y50.1). When oppressed, the soul complains to God for help (Y29.1, Y50.1). Soul and conscience upbraid a wrongful person at the sorting bridge (*chinvalo pereto*), the crossroads of good and evil (Y46.11, Y51.13). In fact, if it belongs to an “evil-ruling, evil-doing, evil-speaking, evil-conceiving, and evil-thinking person, it returns back because it has really been dwelling as a ‘guest’ in the ‘house of wrong.’” (Y49.11). Souls of the righteous, eternally strong, are guarded by *Ahura Mazda* in his abode (Y49.10). The wrongful, especially the superstitious ritualistic priests and princes, are upbraided by their souls because they dwell all along in the house of wrong (Y46.11). They experience repeated failures. The singers of *Haptanghaiti* join in by venerating the soul of the living world, their own souls, those of their domesticated animals, and particularly “the souls of law-abiding, righteous persons, born in whatever land, both men and women, whose consciences are growing, have grown, or shall grow.” (Y39.1-2).

In the Gathas, the soul, if it belongs to a righteous one, lives eternally in the divine abode, but if it belongs to a wrongful one, it temporarily resides, as a guest, in its world of wrong. In other words, only the souls of the righteous cross over the sorting bridge, and those of the wrongful return until the wrongful are refined to be worthy of the crossing at the final turn of their lives. It may be pointed out that there is no indication that the soul is subjected to the consequences of good deeds and evil actions. The rewards and reprimands are more mental than physical and are meted out through one’s *daena*, conscience.

Where the Wrongful?

Zarathushtra makes it clear in his very first discourse on good and evil that one suffers the consequences of evil acts only until such time that one realizes the truth and chooses good. Zarathushtra says:

When the offenders undergo their punishment, then O Wise One, the dominion will be realized for them through good mind. God, then they shall be taught how to deliver the wrong into the hands of righteousness. (Y30.8).

He then makes his famous wish:

May we be among those who make this life fresh! You, lords of wisdom, who bring happiness through righteousness, come, let us be single-minded in the realm of inner-intellect. (Y30.9).

He wishes all the wise people to unite and pool their wisdom in order to create a new world. He adds:

Then, indeed, the power of wrong shall be shattered. Then those

who strive with good name shall immediately be united in the good abode of good mind and righteousness of the Wise One. (Y30.9).

Guidance to righteousness is extended to all, as is salvation (Y28.5, Y30.8, Y31.3,19). The only difference is that salvation is easy for the righteous and hard for the wrongful. It is our opinion that what Zarathushtra calls the fiery or metal ordeal is the process of going through this hardship.

The Sorting Bridge.

But what is the sorting bridge, *chinvato peretu* or as commonly called *chinvat pul*? It is mentioned thrice in the Gathas. It is the bridge which separates Zarathushtra and his companions from the wrongful people. Speaking of the earlier failures in his divine mission and the ultimate success in Yasna 46, Zarathushtra states:

Wise God, whoever, man or woman, shall give me what You know to be the best in life – rewards for righteousness, power through good mind – I shall accompany him and her in glorifying such as You are, and shall, with all of them, cross over the sorting bridge. (Y46.10).

Then he turns to the priests and princes, bent on destroying life (*ahu*) with their evil actions, and says that they are upbraided by their souls when they approach the bridge, only to return until they turn into righteous persons (Y46.11). It must be made clear here that whether the verb *paiti-yeinti* is taken to mean “return” or “approach”, the Gathas do not give the slightest chance of interpreting it to fit with the common notion that those not crossing the bridge fall down into hell.¹¹ In the third instance, Zarathushtra points out:

Thus the conscience of the wrongful truly abandons the path of the upright. His soul openly upbraids him in front of the sorting bridge, because it is his deeds and teachings, a doctrine that ultimately places them in the house of wrong. (Y51.13).

The context of the Gathas on this particular subject is such that it points to one's existence in this living world and not going through an eschatological

11 The tales of *chinvat pul* becoming a broad road for the righteous to easily cross over and turning into as thin as a hair and as sharp as a razor for the wrongful to split into two and drop down into hell and detailed descriptions of heaven with all its pleasures and hell with all the sadistic tortures are written in Pahlavi and Persian books. The Younger Avesta has a few allusions to the state of the world beyond and that too in very late compositions. See also Dhalla, *ibid.* for the description and references.

process leading to a hell beyond.

Does it mean another life? Zarathushtra, divinely logical as he always is, does not describe a vivid picture of a state from which no one has physically returned to tell his experiences. He does speak about the consequences of our thoughts, words, and deeds – better for the good and bad for the evil. Yet he does not draw a line between life and after-death. In fact, “life does not part with death. It is indeed a continuity. And death, a natural process, is a transitory passage, perhaps in an anesthetic state, to eternity, finality.”¹²

Zarathushtra speaks but once of a future life (*parahum*). The stanza reads:

Whoever truly accomplishes through righteousness the complete renovation of life for me, Zarathushtra, as is the will of God, deserves the desired future-life in a fruitful living world as a reward. (Y46.9).

This does not seem to allude to a heaven. It is the fruitful living world in which we live. *Garō demana*, the house of song, interpreted to mean paradise as against *drujo demana*, house of wrong, are explained in the Gathas as the house of good mind (*vangheush demane manangho*), in which Zarathushtra wants us all to “offer Him [*Ahura*] our devotions.” The house of wrong is the house of worst mind in this earthly life of exploitation and destruction. The Gathas say that while turning to good mind and righteousness leads one on the path to wholeness and immortality and places one in the “house of song” to live with *Ahura Mazda*; however, the wrongful, remaining behind, are ultimately refined too, so as to be able to attain wholeness and eternity. In fact, the sublime songs repeatedly emphasize progress, wholeness and immortality as the goal of life to reach, rather, to return to *Ahura Mazda*. The house of song or the house of good mind are but allegories for the ultimate mental state of a righteous person.¹³

A question arises now. Was the Zarathushtrian view of the refinement and the ultimate union of soul with Godhead lost to institutionalized Zoroastrianism, but retained, transformed, and expanded by Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism in the east, by Gnosticism in the west, and by Manichaeism on the Iranian Plateau and around, only to emerge in a form of

12 It may be pointed out that natural death is not at all evil in the Avesta. It is only the death through violence – murder, killing, slaughter – which is considered as an evil act. See “Death in the Gathas.” A. A. Jafarey, *The Zoroastrian*, bimonthly bulletin of the California Zoroastrian Center, June and July 1988.

13 *Parahum*, future life (Y46.19); *garō demana*, the house of song (Y45.8, Y50.4, Y51.15); *vangheush demane manangho*, house of good mind (Y32.15); *drujo demana*, house of wrong (Y46.11, Y49.11, Y51.14); *Achistahya demane manangho*, house of worst mind, (Y32.13,). Had these been related to the so-called dramatized *spenta mainyu* and *anghra mainyu*, the two “abodes” would have definitely been named after them to read *spentahya demana mainyeush*, and *angrahya demana mainyeush!*

Sufism under Islam?¹⁴ Although we know for certain that Zarathushtrian teachings did find their way to east and west and influenced Indian thought, Greek philosophy, and other knowledge-seeking circles, a satisfactory answer requires a deeper study of the subject.

But whatever the outcome, the fact is that the Gathas do not speak about heaven and hell, or of judgment, or of a physical or spiritual resurrection, or of reincarnation and transmigration (*samsara*), or release (*moksha*), or emptiness (*shunya*), but only point to the refining of soul through mind for an ultimate existence with God. A final word of caution. The Gathas are our Guide, our compass. They are thought-provokers (*manthras*). They guide and enlighten our thoughts, point to the right direction, then leave it entirely to us to proceed on a search in order to discover, determine and comprehend the truth. They want us to think, speak, and work for righteousness (*asha*), good mind (vohu manah), good rule (*vohu khshathra*), serenity (*aramaiti*), wholeness (*haurvatat*), and immortality (*ameretat*), in order to inspire and enable us to dwell with our loving God in the blissful state of songful life for ever.

Conclusion.

The two discourses of Zarathushtra (Y30 and 45) should provide us with our conclusion. Good and evil and their consequences depend on thoughts, words and particularly deeds. The word *shyaothana*, translated as “deed” or “action,” literally means “endeavor” and therefore carries a stronger notion than the Hindu and Buddhist term of *karma* which simply means “action”. *Shyaothana* is a serious contemplated effort directed to a definite goal. Obviously, it is the consequences of our *shyaothana*, endeavors which determine how long and how hard it takes a soul to reach its goal.

The two, good and evil, stand poles apart. Men and women who, using the faculties of good “thoughts, teachings, intellects, choices, words, deeds, consciences, and souls” (Y45.2) at their command, pay never-failing attention and reverences to the “word which the Most Progressive One told” Zarathushtra “shall have wholeness and immortality to reach the Wise God through their actions of good mind.” (Y45.6). He terms the ultimate goal as “ushta”, health and happiness through enlightenment which radiates happiness to others. (Y43.1).

O mortals, understand the two principles of prosperity and adversity established by the Wise One, which are long suffering for the wrongful and lasting good for the righteous; you shall,

14 It is interesting to note that Sufism, with its roots deep into the coexisting Zoroastrianism and Buddhism of pre-Islamic days in Central Asia, has some of its orders which believe that the soul remains in this world until it is refined enough to rise and get “lost” into the Godhead (*jana fi-Allah*). Did the Gathic concept of refinement and union and the Buddhist idea of *shunya* blend to give the Sufis the belief?

then, enjoy radiant happiness (ushta).' (Y30.11).

May this treatise prove useful in inspiring the reader in his or her own spiritual quest.

All translations from the Gathas are from *The Gathas. Our Guide*. Ali A. Jafarey, Ushta Publications P.O. Box 1260, Cypress, CA 90630, 1989.

The texts in the Gathic dialect of the Avestan language consist of: *Ahunavar* (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*), the seventeen songs which are the Gathas themselves (Y28 to 34, Y43 to 51, Y53), *Airyema Ishya* (Y54.1), and *Ashem Vohu* (Y27.14), all of which we believe were composed by Zarathushtra himself, and *Haptanghaiti* (Y35 to 41) the seven-chapters; *Yenghe Hatam*, a formula honoring men and women; the *Fshusho Manthra*, the Prospering Thought-provoker (Y58); the *Hadhaokhta*, in praise of inspiration (Y56); and the *Fravarti*, the "Choice of Religion" formula of initiation (Y11.17 to 13.3). Collectively, these Gathic texts are called *Staota Yesnya* in Avesta and *Stot Yasn* in Pahlavi.

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