

## CHAPTER 6

### A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE BASIC TENETS OF ZARATHUSHTRA'S TEACHINGS (PART II)

Now let us pass on to the consideration of the other three **Amesha Spentas**, namely **Armaiti**, **Haurvatat** and **Amere-tat**. In contradistinction to the three mentioned in the previous chapter, all of whom are masculine in gender, these latter three are feminine; and it is perhaps for this reason that they are considered by some to be complementary to the former.<sup>1</sup>

**Armaiti** or **Spenta Armaiti**, the first of the three “rays” of the “Mother Triad” (if so they may be termed), often stands paired with **Asha** in the *Gathas*. The name **Armaiti** consists of two parts, **are** and **maiti**. The former means “Yes” in ancient Aryan speech; in fact, even in modern Persian **âri** means “yes”<sup>2</sup>. In the *Rigveda* too we find the word **âramati** in the phrase:

स्याद् अस्मे आरमतिर् वसुयुः ।

syâd asme âramatir vasuyuh

*Rigveda 7.34.21*

The second part of the term **Armaiti** is derived from **manas**, “mind”; and so the word **Are-maiti** means “Yes-mindedness”, if such a term may be coined (for its nearest equivalent in standard English, “Positive thinking”, has somewhat different connotations nowadays and does not quite reflect all shades of the meaning of this term). **Armaiti** or “Yes-mindedness” signifies that innocent affirmative faith which **Yama** in the *Katha Upanishad* enjoins upon his pupil **Nachiketas** as a *sine qua non* for the ultimate realisation of the Divine:

Not with the mind has man the power to get God, no, nor through speech, nor by the eye. Unless one first says “He is”, how can one ever ultimately realise Him?

*Kathopanishad 2.3.124*

**Armaiti** is the open-minded, child-like, “Yea-saying”<sup>3</sup> faith which we must have if we are to even begin to seek the Truth. “Yes-mindedness” is not to be confused with gullible credulity;

<sup>1</sup> Because of the fact that they are of the opposite gender, there is a parallel of sorts between the relationship of the first three **Amesha Spentas** with the last three, and the relationship of the **Trimûrti** or three main deities of Hinduism—**Brahmâ**, **Vishnu** and **Shiva**—and their “consorts”, namely **Saraswatî**, **Lakshmî** and **Pârvatî**. As we shall see later on in this book, it is very likely that **Brahmâ**, **Vishnu** and **Shiva** all acquired their present prominence in Hinduism as a result of Zarathushtri influence; and thus the parallel is not all surprising. Indeed it is very likely that the concept of the Trinity in Christianity is also derived from Zarathushtri sources, and it is widely known that the Archangels of late-period Judaism are Zarathushtri in origin; all of which would mean that the diagram drawn by Dr. Taraporewala (and reproduced earlier) is not at all off the mark!

<sup>2</sup> The older English form “ay” or “aye” (as in “Aye, aye, sir!”) may also be derived from this root: or else it may just be a case of similar-sounding words acquiring similar meanings over time.—By the way, this phenomenon is alive and well in modern English too: I just heard yesterday that a US government official in Washington, DC was fired for using the word “niggardly” (as in “stingy”) in a document, which his superiors felt sounded too much like the word “nigger”! And even more significantly, although after a proper review he was later re-instated to his job, when people on the street were interviewed to see what their reaction was, a large number felt the firing was justified, and that in the interest of political correctness, government officials should not even use words which are *similar* to those which might be offensive to someone or other in our society, simply because similar-sounding words might cause their listeners to ascribe to them a meaning similar to the other, *really* offensive term.

<sup>3</sup> This reminds us, does it not, of passages from Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Although there

it does not mean accepting as true whatever anybody may happen to say; it is rather belief in the words of those who have spent their whole lives, often at enormous cost, trying to find out the truth about The Truth—the Seers, the Sages, the Prophets. It would be sheer perversity to dismiss their vast experience, which alone might give us a clue to the solution of the riddle of Existence. **Armaiti** asks us to give, at the very least, due weight to the work of past experts in the Science of Being and Becoming. It is not blind faith; it is only a provisional acceptance of the word of the Prophet, until one finds out for oneself. If, after seeking, one discovers that what the Prophet teaches about the Soul and God and Reality and the Life Eternal is mere fabrication, one is entitled to disbelieve—but one should at least seek *first*, seek in the *right way* and *unto the end*, with “Yes-mindedness”. This, as a bare minimum, is what **Armaiti** expects us to do: and this is what we all actually *do* do as children. (And “except ye become as little children”, as Jesus truly said, “ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven”.)<sup>4</sup>

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The next **Amesha Spenta** is **Haurvatat**. This word is derived by compounding the common Aryan prefix सु **su-** (**hu-** in Iranian, and εὔ **eu-** in Greek—as in “eulogy”, “euphony” and “euphemism”) which signifies “good”, appended to the term उर्वन् **urvan** “soul”<sup>5</sup>—and thus meaning, literally, “The [state of the] Good Soul” (सर्वतात). A word similar to it is found in the *Rigveda*, where it connotes something like “Perfection”:

*{to give original and translation}*

*Rigveda 7.57.74*

It is perhaps best, then, to understand **Haurvatat** as “Perfection, [which is] the state of the Good Soul”.<sup>6</sup>

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And the last Holy Immortal is **Ameretat** (or **Ameretetat**), which, as the Sanskrit cognate अमृतत **amrtata** also indicates, means “Immortality”. These two, **Haurvatat** and **Ameretat**, are usually found together in the *Gathas*.

These, then, are the **Amesha Spentas** or “Holy Immortals”. Their position in Gathic theology is extremely high; so very high, indeed, that in many places the *Gathas* seem to address themselves to the **Amesha Spentas** as if they were living, breathing,

is no reason to believe that Nietzsche ever read the *Gathas* or knew what the real Zarathushtra spake, there are nevertheless points of similarity between the two. But then, why should this be surprising? After all, Nietzsche, for all his faults, was a brilliant thinker; and it is one of Zoroastrianism’s strongest points (in comparison, at least, with most other religions) that it encourages the adherent to think things out for himself or herself, and to find out the truth independently. Indeed this trait was so strong among the Zarathushtris of ancient times that they were widely known in those days as “truth-loving Persians”.

<sup>4</sup> This sort of faith is not just required for children, but for all seekers after the truth. In science, for instance, one progresses by first formulating a hypothesis, and assuming (provisionally) that the hypothesis is true, one tests it. If it turns out not to be true, one rejects it; but not until one has at least provisionally accepted it in order to test it. If one were to take as true only that which is *known* to be true, without assuming as true that which is not yet known in order to test it, one would never advance in one’s knowledge. In this sense, then, **Armaiti** means “faith”, not so much in the Roman Catholic sense of *credo quia absurdum est* (“I believe because it is absurd”), but rather in the sense of “I believe because I want to know the truth”. This, in fact, is the reason it has traditionally been paired in Zoroastrianism with **Asha**, “Truth”.

<sup>5</sup> The modern Persian for “soul” is **ravan**, obviously derived from **urvan**. *A propos*, I have recently learned an interesting thing, namely that in the New Testament—which, as I think all people know, was originally written in Greek—there is no precise word for “soul” (in the sense of a part of the personality that survives bodily death)! The Greek word translated as “soul” in the King James Bible is in fact ψυχη **psyche** (pronounced “psüche”, with a hard “ch”) which is also used in the Greek New Testament as meaning “life” (in the earthly sense, *i.e.*, from birth till death.) Thus the translators seem to have used the English words “soul” and “life” capriciously to translate the Greek ψυχη **psyche**, which in any case in classical Greek means neither the one nor the other. (The original New Testament uses another Greek word, ζωη **zoê**, to signify “Eternal Life”, such as one may hope for in heaven. In classical Greek, of course, **zoê** does signify “life”, as in “zoology”.)

<sup>6</sup> Another translation has often been “Wholeness”.

conscious entities, not incorporeal Principles<sup>7</sup> or attributes of the Divine. At times we find them all addressed together as **Mazdao Ahuraongho**, “The **Mazda Ahuras**” (plural), a term which includes the Supreme Being as well. There is virtually no verse in the *Gathas* which does not speak of one or the other of the **Amesha Spentas**. The *Gathas* are, in a sense, Hymns *specifically addressed* to these Eternal Holy Ones.

One point, therefore, which makes Zarathushtra’s teaching stand out from that of Vedic teaching in general<sup>8</sup> is their emphasis on specific, abstract *Principles*—as opposed, certainly, to rites, rituals and ceremonies, of which he was certainly never fond: he evidently liked keeping things simple.

Zarathushtra’s emphasis on Principles is also reflected in the *Gatha*’s stress on strict and uncompromising monotheism—a monotheism so strict, as we have seen, that it did not countenance even other *names* conferred upon the Great Spirit: a lesson his followers seem to have forgotten over the ages, when at a later period they compiled a list of 101 names of **Ahura Mazda** (of which the 44th, by the way, is **Varuna**). Zarathushtra’s insistence on absolute monotheism—the first such proclamation ever made in the history of humankind—has been the inspiration of every single subsequent religion that has stood the test of time; and as we shall show, this inspiration was not always indirect: a great deal of research carried out by numerous scholars indicates that both Judaism and Islam, and through Judaism Christianity as well, were directly influenced by **Mazdayasni** ideas. We shall examine these matters in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

That God is not only One, but that He is in addition *Formless*, is also clear from Zarathushtra’s selection of the term **Ahura** or **असुर Asura**, which, as we saw, is probably derived from the root **असु asu** “life-breath”. This word has a very interesting history. The expression in English which most closely corresponds with it is “Spirit”, a term directly descended from the Latin **SPIRITUS** which also initially meant “breath” or “life” (*cf.* **SPIRARE** “to breathe”). In translations of the Bible the originals of the Latin **SPIRITUS** are **πνευμα pneuma** “air” (Greek) and **רוח ruah** “wind” (Hebrew), both of which are in the Bible closely connected with the spiritual meaning of the term **असुर Asura** or **Ahura**: for the word **רוח ruah** first occurs at the very beginning of *Genesis* with this same connotation:

... ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים  
...ve-ruah Elohim merahefet al-pnei ha-mayim

...and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.<sup>9</sup>

*Genesis 1.24*

<sup>7</sup> This trait, however, is common to almost all ancient texts, especially Aryan. The Vedas anthropomorphise just about everything in nature, starting with their very first line **अग्निमिळे पुरोहितम् agnim ilé purohitam** “Fire, thou preceptor of Iran”; and the Greeks too used to ascribe a human form to just about everything, including **Ψυχη Psyche**, who according to them was a maiden. In this way, most probably, were born the “gods” of the ancient Aryans. In our benighted day and age we seem to have lost the ability to commune with nature and with spiritual principles such as Goodness, which probably explains our blatant disrespect towards both. This may also be due to our Judæo-Christian heritage—even those of us who are not Jews or Christians are affected by it, due to the enormous influence Western thought has exerted on the world since the dawn of Industrial Age—and the emphasis in the Bible of miracles wherein God overpowers nature, for example by causing the Red Sea to part or the Sun to stand still, such subjugation of nature being proffered as “proof” of God’s Divinity. And in addition, due to our modern stress on monotheism—and our subsequent feelings of superiority over polytheists—we think it was our distant forefathers who were misled, rather than ourselves; but given the mess we have made of our own environment, who is say we are right in so thinking? Maybe those who worshipped the forests, waters and shining streams were actually more enlightened than we are, after all. I have discussed these matters at much greater length in Chapter 17.

<sup>8</sup> It is true, no doubt, that the Vedas emphasise the more material things in creation far more than what we today call the spiritual—that they sing the glories, for example, of the Earth, the Waters, the Wind and Fire with far greater gusto than they do those of Faith, Righteousness or the Good Mind, even though they don’t altogether neglect these latter principles. This is one additional reason scholars think Zarathushtra lived the *late* Vedic period, when people were beginning to realise that abstract values and qualities were far more important in life than concrete material things, even the most glorious of them like the Sun. But then again, are the Vedas wrong to emphasise the glories of nature, even more than those of the spirit? Would not our planet have been a much better place today, had we demonstrated towards it even a fraction of the reverence our Vedic ancestors did? And if the answer to this question is “Yes”, shouldn’t one call the Earth or Fire, for example, just as decidedly “spiritual” entities as Truth or Righteousness? I leave it to the reader to decide.

Even Islam has adopted this terminology (in the word **ruh** meaning “soul”); and when so many tongues and so many religions have used the same imagery to illustrate the same concept, it is as clear as can be that the term **Ahura Mazda** which Zarathushtra selected for the Supreme Being is best translated into English by the expression “Great Spirit” or “Mighty Spirit” (and we discussed earlier the meaning of the term **Mazda**). When one considers in addition that Judaic doctrine, which from its inception eschewed any and every form ascribed to the Almighty, nevertheless accepts **רוח** **ruah** as a perfectly appropriate term to be coupled with **אלהים** **Elohim** “God”, it also becomes clear that Zarathushtra too meant **Ahura** to connote the *Formlessness* of the Divine: about which we are left in no doubt whatsoever when we read his forceful invectives against the **daevas** and their graven images or **murthis**.<sup>10</sup>

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Perhaps it is as well at this stage to clear up a misconception, common unfortunately among many people especially in the West and even—sad to say—among some Parsis, that Zarathushtra’s teaching is *dualism* and not *monotheism*,<sup>11</sup> and that he has postulated an “eternal struggle between **Ormuzd** and **Ahriman**, God and the Devil, or Good and Evil”, and that in this struggle the two sides are more or less evenly matched.<sup>12</sup> It should be emphasised that Zarathushtra himself never postulated any such thing; it was the benighted theologians of a later epoch (witness the loose **dvandva** [couple] **Ahura Mazda** compressed into the compact **Ormuzd**—a transformation that must have taken many centuries) who cooked up all this silly stuff; another reason, in my opinion, for the decline of formal Zoroastrianism. What the Prophet *himself* said was that **Ahura Mazda** creates two **mainyus** or forces, the **Spenta** “Peaceful” or “Holy” force and the **Angra** or “unholy” force, which are never in agreement with each other; and of these two, “the Wise”, says Zarathushtra, “choose aright; [but] the unwise choose not thus—and go astray”. It is clear from the very first verse of Chapter 3 of the *Yasna*, which deals with the subject, that Zarathushtra considers *both* of these forces as created by **Mazda** (**Mazdatha**), and “it is only in later Zoroastrian works”, as Dr. Taraporewala says, that “this doctrine has undergone a strange transformation: from being a ‘creation of Mazda’ the Evil Spirit has become the rival and almost the co-equal of God”. In point of fact, Zarathushtra indicates that these **mainyus** are at a lower level than the Mighty Spirit, for he prays:

**Mainyush hacha thwa eaongho**

<sup>9</sup> More literally, “The Wind of God moves hither and thither across the face of the water.” As you can see, in its initial parts even the Bible has nature’s imagery at heart. Later on, of course, the Bible gets much more abstract: “And what does the LORD require of thee, but to do justice and walk humbly before thy God?” But in **Genesis** itself the picture of the LORD God that emerges is much more akin to that of the Greek **Zeus** or the Vedic **Indra**, taken however to a higher extreme.

<sup>10</sup> The idea that the Deity should not have a form did not *originate* with Zarathushtra; but there can be no question that it was he who first laid so big a stress on this concept, which was subsequently taken over by Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

<sup>11</sup> The idea that **Mazda Yasna** is dualistic is very ancient indeed—as old, in fact, as the *RigVeda*, wherein we find the following verse: **द्विता यदीम् किशतासः अभिष्व नमस्यन्तः उपवोचन्त भृगवः** “Even as the **Chistis** [mystics] of the **Bhrigu** clan, splendid and respectful *dualists*, greet him [*i.e.*, the Fire]...” As we have seen (Chapter 2), Zarathushtra seems to have belonged to the clan of the **Bhrigus**, and thus it is very possible that the dualistic trend in Zoroastrianism antedates even Zarathushtra. However, as we shall see, this dualism is *not* to be construed so much as a struggle between Good and Evil, but more as the basis of Zoroastrian ontology (science of Being and Becoming; or, as we may say in Western terms, the Zarathushtri view of Creation—*i.e.*, as to how, from the undivided Unity of **Ahura Mazda**, the multifaceted universe comes into existence.) We shall discuss this matter further in the following pages.

<sup>12</sup> So evenly matched, in fact, that according to later Zoroastrian theologians, unless humanity comes to the aid of God, at the end of the day it might be the Devil who ends up the winner! Certainly no other religion has ever portrayed the struggle between the Divine and Anti-Divine as being so very closely contested. This was probably a way to make the populace realise that they, too had an obligation to be righteous, and should not merely sit back on the sidelines and watch Good and Evil slog it out between themselves; and from that viewpoint the idea is worth taking seriously, for unless we ourselves participate in the struggle to enthrone the Good and to dethrone Evil, religion—of any sort—doesn’t make any sense.

From the [level of the] **mainyus**, I would rise up to Thee, [O Ahura Mazda].

*Gatha 28.11*

The **mainyus** are the *forces*, or *powers*, of **Mazda**. They did not come into being all of a sudden, out of nothing; they issued out of the transcendent status of **Mazda**, and the belong to the Great Spirit.

The reason for Zarathushtra’s postulation of the two **mainyus** or forces appears in actual fact far more complex and all-embracing than an illustration of the struggle between Good and Evil, which is only a part of it. We should go into this matter in some depth, for it forms an important aspect of the Iranian Prophet’s teaching, particularly from the ontological point of view.

One of the verses of the 30th Chapter of the *Yasna*, in which as we said earlier this subject is discussed at length, says:

**At cha hyat ta hem mainyu jasetem paourvim dazda gaem  
cha ajyaitim cha**

Now when these two **mainyus** first came together, they created motion and also inertia [or “non-movement”].

*Gatha 30.44*

From the philosophical perspective this verse is of very great importance, for it elucidates the Zoroastrian view of Creation: the process by which the multifaceted Universe came into being. It is the basis of Zoroastrian ontology, or Theory of Existence.

The Hindu stand on the matter, as epitomised by the **Sânkhya** doctrine, is that the multifarious phenomena of nature came into existence by the action of *three* forces, namely **सत्त्व sattva**, **रजस् rajas** and **तमस् tamas**<sup>13</sup>—as in the following verse:

अजामेकां लोहितशुक्लकृष्णाम् ।  
ब्रह्मी प्रजाः सृजमानां सरुपाः ॥

**Prakriti**, [*i.e.*, the primeval, undifferentiated, “pre-created” substance of Nature], which is of red, white and black hue,<sup>14</sup> and is unborn and unique, gives birth to many offspring resembling herself [and thus gives rise to the manifested Universe].

*Shvetâshvatara Upanishad 4.5*

Now Zarathushtra does not recognise the second of these, **rajas**, as an independent force, although he does allude to it, as for example **hen-kereta** (Sanskrit **सं-कृत्** or **सं-कुर्वतः**: “the equi-

<sup>13</sup> The Hindu terms **sattva**, **rajas** and **tamas** may loosely be translated as “[the spirits of] truth, [of] energy [and of] darkness”. These are the three **गुण gunas**, or properties, of things and people. Each object or person, according to Hindu doctrine, contains all three in varying proportions; and the characteristics of that particular object or individual is a result of the variation in the proportions of these properties. Thus, for example, a **Rishi** would contain a great deal of **sattva** in his personality, while a warrior would likely contain a great deal of **rajas** in his, and a thief might contain a great deal of **tamas**: not, however, that the other **gunas** would be entirely absent from the personality of any of them.

<sup>14</sup> The colours of these three **gunas** are traditionally taken to be white (for **sattva**), red (for **rajas**) and black (for **tamas**), and that is how the **shloka** quoted here refers to them. The reason is that objects too, in addition to persons, are regarded as possessing these three properties in varying proportions. For instance, the red fire would be considered very “energetic”, and thus to be highly **râjasic**; the burnt-out and blackened ember would be considered to be rather dark, and thus **tâmasic**; while the extremely white Sun would be regarded as **sâtivic**, and thus more “righteous” than any other object on earth or in the heavens.

doer”—*Gatha 31.14*); he considers **rajas** to be only a state of *balance* between the other two, **सत्त्व sattwa** or **spenta** and **तमस् tamas** or **angra**. Evidently, by the principle of the “razor” enunciated millennia later by William of Occam, Zarathushtra felt the need to eliminate the unnecessary.

It is to be noted, moreover, that although **Sânkhya** speaks of *three* forces, the *Rigveda* itself speaks only of *two*:

स सन्नीचीः स विषूचीर्वसानः ।  
आ वरीवर्ति भुवनेषु अन्तः ॥

Wielding the two forces, the **Sadrichi** [or centripetal] and the **vishuchi** [or centrifugal], He rotates in the Universe [or, “this is how the Universe evolved”].

*Rigveda 10.177.3*

Thus the *Gatha*—as is of course to be expected—is more representative of the original Vedic point of view. It is also, in effect, the same as that of the widely accepted modern philosophical point of view, as represented by Hegel, who says that on account of the contradiction inherent in the Absolute, which can be neither Real nor Unreal (*cf.* नासदासीन्नो सदासीत् तदानीम् “Then there was neither non-Being nor Being”—*vide* Chapter 1), there arises a process he calls “dialectics”: the continuous sequence of Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis; and the Universe is the result of the onward recurrence of these. Hegel is careful to note that of these three, Thesis and Antithesis are the only *real* forces, and that Synthesis is only a stage of unstable equilibrium, which breaks up again and again into Thesis and Antithesis: in fact, this is the reason he calls the process *dialectics* and not “*trialectics*”: that is to say, the interplay of *two* forces, not three. (So the *Gatha* is quite up-to-date in this regard!)

But Zarathustra does not stop at describing the origin of the Universe: he goes on to show how these same two forces affect us, as thinking, feeling, living human beings.<sup>15</sup> For the next lines of the same verse say:

**Yatha cha anghat apemem angheush achishto dregvatam  
at asuaune Vahisitem Mano**

[These two forces] ultimately, at the end of life, become the Vilest Lie for the villainous [on the one hand], and the most Loving Heart for the Righteous [on the other].

*Ibid.*

It is *this* which gave rise to the concept—correct in its own way, no doubt—that **Mazda** wishes us to side actively with **Spenta mainyu** against the **Angra**. However, unthoughtful theolo-

<sup>15</sup> We have to remind ourselves that in ancient times, people did not subscribe to the modern notion of dividing the sciences into those dealing with matter and those dealing with the mind, each group separate from the other. Thus whenever ontology and creation were discussed, so also were morality and ethics: they *had* to be connected, for it was inconceivable in the minds of the ancients that the Almighty would even think of separating His function as Creator of the World from His function as The Lord Most Righteous and Merciful.

gians of a later age promoted **Spenta mainyu** to the level of the Great **Asura** Himself,<sup>16</sup> which was philosophically speaking quite wrong; this elevated **Ahriman** (the degenerate form of the Gathic term **Angra mainyu**) to the status of **Ormuzd** (the degenerate form of **Ahura Mazda**), and made Satan a rival in the Battle of Existence, quite capable of overthrowing even God if we humans did not come to His aid. Zarathushtra himself did not say, or for that matter even imply, any such thing. For him, **Ahura Mazda** was always supreme.

In point of fact Zarathushtra does not even deem evil-doers *eternally* condemned; there is hope for them too, for their evil passion must, perforce, wear off one day; and then even these lost ones are taken back by **Mazda**, in His infinite mercy, unto His bosom:

**At cha yada aesham  
kaena jamaiti aenanghamat Mazda taibyō kshathrem  
Vohu Managha voi-vidaitiaibyō saste Ahura yoi Ashai  
daden jastyō drujem**

And when the frenzy departs from these sinners, then **Mazda** Himself, with the help of His Loving Mind, makes them understand, and inspires in them His Strength; **Ahura** Himself instructs those who surrender the Lie into the hands of Righteousness.

*Gatha 30.8*

Why, Zarathushtra envisions the ultimate collapse of the Evil One himself:

**Yad ji ava drujo avo bavaiti  
skendo spayathrahyaat asishta yaojante a hushitoish  
Vangheush Manangho**

Then forthwith the inflated Devil collapses, while those who are purest in heart are yoked to the cord of the Loving Mind.

*Gatha 30.10*

It should be remarked that in the above two verses, as also elsewhere, Zarathushtra does not refer to the Devil as **Angra mainyu** but as **Druj**: a word which connotes something far more debased, evil, vile and maleficent than merely *anger*.<sup>17</sup> It is, in the deepest (and unholy) sense the very opposite of **Asha**, and signifies “The Lie”, “Unrighteousness”, “the Wickedest of the iniquitous”, the “Prince of Darkness”. We saw (page ...) that our very word “dark” is probably an offshoot of this term. The Sanskrit cognate **द्रुह** means “fiend” or “evil power”, while the

<sup>16</sup> I think it ought to be remembered that in contrast to Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity—in which there have been many Prophets, **Rishis** and even **Avatāras**—in Zoroastrianism the *only* person deemed to have been in contact with the Divine is Zarathushtra himself. As a result, Persian theologians who came after Zarathushtra, whenever they injected a notion of their own into Zoroastrianism, did so claiming that it had been **Ahura Mazda** Himself who had revealed these notions to Zarathushtra. Thus even the **Vendidad**, which as its language amply shows could not have been composed even in the same millennium as Zarathushtra—let alone the same century—nevertheless purports to be teachings imparted to Zarathushtra by **Ahura Mazda** (and orthodox Parsis still believe this to have been the case!) The result is that the Zoroastrian scriptures subsequent to the **Gathas** were composed by many people who, in all probability, knew nothing of the Mind Divine—which might have been one reason why Islam so readily overthrew Zoroastrianism in Iran, while it was incapable of doing the same to Hinduism in India (despite India having been conquered by Muslim invaders again and again, and in fact having been under Mogul Islamic rule for almost two centuries.)

<sup>17</sup> Of course **angra mainyu** doesn't *really* mean the “angry mind”, but as I explained earlier, in Indo-European languages words which *sound* similar begin to acquire similar meanings too, and so I thought I might contribute to this process myself a little bit!

Old Persian **draoga** or **drauga** (also derived from **druj** or **drug**) means both “enemy” as well as “the untruthful One”—a term used, for instance, by the Emperor Darius in rock edicts carved out under his orders. The Rev. J.H. Moulton, a Christian divine and scholar of the Avesta who taught the subject at Oxford during the early years of this century, remarks on this: “We can see that the king’s language is most remarkably in accord with the Gathas, since every form of evil reduces itself to this one term”. And he adds: “For Zarathushtra himself, as studied in his own Hymns, ‘The Lie’ is beyond all computation the name for the spirit of evil.”

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But enough of these dark and dismal thoughts. Let us turn to what Zarathushtra regarded as the *ultimate aim of his teaching*: indeed, of Existence itself.

Nietzsche’s **Zarathustra**, virtually echoing the original Prophet, sings:<sup>18</sup>

<i>Eins!</i>	<i>One!</i>
© Mensch! gib Acht!	O Man! attend!
<i>Zwei!</i>	<i>Two!</i>
Was spricht die tiefe Mitter- nacht?	What doth deep midnight’s voice contend?
<i>Drei!</i>	<i>Three!</i>
“Ich schlief, ich schlief—	I slept my sleep—
<i>Vier!</i>	<i>Four!</i>
Aus tiefen Traum bin ich er- wacht: -	And now awake at dreaming’s end:-
<i>Fünf!</i>	<i>Five!</i>
Die Welt ist tief,	The world is deep,
<i>Sech!</i>	<i>Six!</i>
Und tiefer als der Tag ge- dacht.	Deeper than day can compre- hend.
<i>Sieben!</i>	<i>Seven!</i>
Tief ist ihr Weh—	Deep is its woe—
<i>Acht!</i>	<i>Eight!</i>
Lust—tiefer noch als Herze- leid:	Joy—deeper than heart’s agony:
<i>Neun!</i>	<i>Nine!</i>
Weh spricht, Vergeh!	Woe says: Fade! Go!
<i>Zehn!</i>	<i>Ten!</i>
Doch alle Lust will Ewigkeit—	But all Joy wants Eternity—
<i>Elf!</i>	<i>Eleven!</i>

<sup>18</sup> You may notice that Nietzsche spells the name of the Prophet **Zarathustra**, eliminating the “h” between the “s” and the “t”. This is also how many books and even encyclopædias—including the famous **Grolier’s Encyclopedia**—spell the Persian Prophet’s name today. But it should be remembered that Nietzsche wrote in German, not in English; and in German, an “s” before a “t” is pronounced exactly like “sh” in English. Thus Nietzsche intended the name to be pronounced in exactly the same way as we pronounce **Zarathushtra** in English; and indeed that is exactly how it was pronounced originally (as far as we are aware.)—By the way, it is a sign of the utter @\$%& of scholars today, that when I saw the name spelled **Zarathustra** in the **Grolier’s Encyclopedia**, I wrote (by e-mail) to the editors pointing out their error; but all I got in reply was a polite note acknowledging my comment, without anyone doing anything to rectify that mistake! One wonders, doesn’t one, how the world gets along at all with “scholars” graduating from our universities.

—Will tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit!”  
Zwölf!

—Wants deep, deep Eternity!”  
Twelve!

*Also Sprach Zarathustra 3.15.3*

And the very first verse of the *Gatha* describes the goal of life in the most unambiguous terms:

**Ahya yasa nemangha  
Ustana jasto rafedhrahya  
Manyeuhs Mazdao paourvim spentahya**

For this I pray—I call upon Thy Name  
With hands outstretched—for *Rapture*, Holy Bliss:  
O Great Spirit, first I pray for this!

*Gatha 28.1*

Truly, all Being is hard to demonstrate; it is hard to make it speak. But tell me, brothers: is not the most wonderful of all things the most clearly demonstrated?

*Thus Spake Zarathustra—“Of Otherworldsmen”*

Is it not, indeed?

*Beethoven:*

<i>Freude, schöner Götterfunken, Tochter aus Elysium— Wir betreten, feurtrunken Himmliſcher, dein Heiligtum. Deine Zauber binden wieder Was die Mode streng geteilt: Alle Menschen werden Brüder Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt!</i>	<i>Joy, thou Lovely Spark of God Daughter of the Highest Heaven, We now tread, drunk with Fire Sacred, thy holy sanctuary. Thy magic bonds again together All that custom rends asunder; All men bretheren do become Where fly gentle wings of thine!</i>
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*Schiller, “Ode to Joy”:  
as sung in the last movement of  
Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony*

*The Upanishads:*

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते  
अप्राप्य मनसा सह  
आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान्  
न बिभेति कुतश्चेति  
एतं ह वाव न तपति  
किमहं साधु नाकरवम्

किमहं पापमकरवमिति  
स य एवं विद्वानेते आत्मानं स्पृणुते  
उभे हि एवेषेते आत्मानं स्पृणुते  
य एवं वेद  
इत्युपनिषद् ॥

The Delight of the Divine—the voice returns thence without being able to describe it, and neither can the mind grasp it. Who knows the Bliss of **Brahman**? Such a one shall fear nought, in this world or in the next. Verily, remorse and her torment shall not consume him, bewailing “Why have I left undone that which was good, why have I done that which was evil?” For having known them for what they are, he delivers his spirit; yea, having known both good and evil to be alike he sets free his innermost self, he who knows this Eternal Joy. And this indeed is the *Upanishad*, the very secret of the *Veda*.

*Taittirīya Upanishad, Brahmānanda Valli*

*King David:*

לבו נרננה ליהוה נריעה לצור ישענו:  
נקדמה פניו בתודה בזמרת נריע לו:

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a Joyful Noise unto the Rock of our Salvation; let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a Joyful Noise unto Him with Psalms.

*Psalm 95.1,2*

For *Joy* is to Zarathushtra, as it is to Nietzsche, to Beethoven and Schiller, to the author of the *Upanishad* and to the Psalmist—indeed, is it not to all of us?—its *own* justification: *it is the one thing that needs no further justification*. And it is the great glory of Zarathushtra that of all the Sages, all the Seers, all the Prophets and composers and authors and poets of history, he was the first to say so in the most unambiguous terms:

Vahishta ishtis sravi Zarathushtrahe Spitamahya  
Ye ji hoi dat ayapta  
Ashat hacha Ahuro Mazdao  
Yavoi vispai a hvanghevim  
Yaecha hoi daben sasken cha  
daenyao vanghuyao ukhdha shyaothnena cha  
At cha hoi schantu managha  
ukhdhaish shyaothnenaish cha  
KSHNOOM MAZDAO VAHMAI  
fraoret yasnans cha

Fulfilled has been the Prophet's dearest wish—  
Of Spitaman Zarathushtra;—for on him  
Is **Ahura Mazda**'s greatest gift bestowed:  
A marvelous existence filled with Joy!  
Those who mocked him, even they have learnt  
To reverence the teachings of his Faith,  
And follow this good Creed in words and works:  
May they too, in thought, word and deed attain  
The Bliss of Transcendental **Mazda** now;  
May every act of theirs sing of His praise!

*Gatha 53.1,2*

This is how the fifth and last *Gatha* begins. The theme, in fact, of the first verse of the first *Gatha* is taken up by it, and the Rapture (**Rafedhra** or **रफत्र rafatra**—from which the very term “rapture” would seem to be derived) for which Zarathushtra prays with outstretched hands at the beginning of his Hymns, is his at the end; and not his alone, but for all who tread the path of Righteousness. **Rafedhra** is not mere pleasure or contentment, or even happiness; it is the Soul's Ecstasy, the experience of supreme Bliss Divine; a Joy not dependent on any external circumstance whatsoever; that which beggars description and eludes the imagination, and yet is more real than Reality itself:

**Khshanauthra Ahurahe Mazdao!**

The Bliss of **Ahura Mazda**!

Virtually every prayer session of a Zoroastrian is preceded by this phrase.

**K H S H N O O M !**

This is how we find the word written in ancient Zoroastrian literature. It is a powerful word, and it packs a lot of meaning. Its origin, **क्षनु kshanu-**, is an ancient Aryan root signifying “[to] please”, “[to] delight”, “[to] rejoice”. It also has connotations of “[to] improve”, and more—it also connotes “[to] sharpen”. The word **Khshnoom** thus signifies something far more intense than the modern terms “Joy”, “Bliss” or “Delight”: it denotes a Joy that not only delights, but ravishes; a boundless Bliss which continually improves upon itself; an Ecstasy as sharp as the sharpest pain—and as unbearable too, except to the purest of souls and most Righteous of spirits. It is that Rapture which almost makes one feel one's heart would break: have you never, gentle reader, when experiencing something supremely, exquisitely, even excruciatingly lovely—a Florentine street in the hazy au-

tumn twilight, perhaps, or the snow-capped peak of Mount Hermon glimpsed over the hills and Sea of Galilee in the spring-time; a Michelangelo sculpture or a Beethoven sonata seen or heard again after a long interval; the cheery chortle of your first-born, or a single wild flower on the shores of a deep blue ocean—or maybe a dream you dreamed that was so vivid, so full of clarity, colours and sounds and even smells and taste and touch that it remains alive in your memory to this day: have you never felt that it was so *hurtfully* beautiful to your heart that you couldn't stand it any more, that you almost cried out inside "Please, *please* make it *not* so beautiful!" Did it not affect you both physically and psychologically; did it not grip your very guts, was as intense—but in an opposite sense, so to speak—as the keenest pain you have ever known. **Khshnoom** is all this, and more. It wells up from within; it arises from no external factor; *you* can do nothing to make it happen; it is the gift of the Great Spirit alone. But when you do experience it,—even if it be but for a moment!—it is as real as all the rest of reality put together; indeed the rest of reality appears almost unreal in comparison, and even the sharpest pain and the intensest suffering turns into a comparative illusion in confrontation with this concentrated quintessence of *Is-ness*. Was it not *this* that enabled Beethoven to continue composing—and composing his greatest works at that—after a cruel fate had robbed him of his hearing: in gratitude for which he could not leave his last, the most sublime symphony ever composed, in purely instrumental form, but had to complete it with the Choral "*Ode to Joy*"? Is it not this ecstasy that enabled Michelangelo to not only bear his agony, but almost to invite the latter upon himself—to "ask for it", so to speak—in order to somehow balance, as it were, the former. Have we not heard how the Sufi Saint Mansur al-Hallaj, in the ravishment of the "caresses of Infinite Beauty", at the ecstasy of the realisation that Reality was the real *he*—himself and no other!—announced in the most awestruck tones **An'al Haqq** "*I am the Truth!*" and begged the astonished townsfolk of Baghdad to pelt him with rocks: "So that", he said, "we may all go to heaven: you for having killed an infidel who has dared to equate himself with the Most High, and I too, having died at the height of Beatitude"! Did not St. Stephen, at the moment of being stoned to death, declare "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." Innumerable Prophets, Saints and Martyrs have died the cruelest of deaths, and even—what is crueller still—lived the most persecuted of lives, with an eternal smile on their radiant faces and genuine good will for their fellow men—nay, for their persecutors and oppressors themselves—in their hearts; for they "rejoiced, and were exceeding glad", their inmost being filled to overflowing with **Khshnoom**

**Mazdao Vahmai**, “the Bliss of **Mazda**, [Who is] the **Brahman**”.  
**सैष भार्गवि वारुणि विद्या**, “This is the lore of **Bhrigu**, the lore of **Varuna** Who has His firm foundation in the highest heaven.”—So even the *Taittirîya Upanishad* admits, even as it re-introduces **Bhârgava** Zarathushtra’s and **Asura Vedhas**’s sublime teaching into the India in which Mighty **Indra** himself, along with his three-and-thirty thousand **devas**, had been victorious over the **Asuras**. . . . And is this not as grand a compliment as ever was paid by one religious movement to another—one that, moreover, was its arch-rival?