

UNDERSTANDING
THE GATHAS

THE HYMNS OF
ZARATHUSHTRA

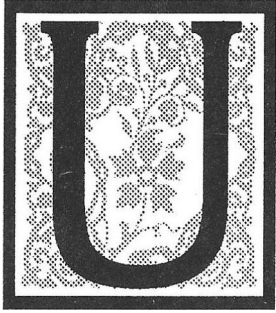


Introductory Lectures
on Gathic Themes

By

Dinshaw J. Irani

Edited with an Introduction by
Kaikhosrov D. Irani



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PREFACE

The chapters of this book were originally delivered as lectures to audiences of Zoroastrians who had little familiarity with the Gathas (the hymns of Zarathushtra) by my father, Dinshaw J. Irani, between 1935 and 1937. Some I believe, were delivered in Europe, but most were short talks to young Zoroastrian high-school students in Bombay. They were meant to introduce the audience to some of the topics and salient ideas in the Gathas.

The notes of these lectures, some quite full and some very sketchy, were never published. Parts of them were incorporated in some of my father's writings. Since my father's death in 1938, these notes were kept with a collection of manuscripts on the literature of Iran. My mother, Mithibai, brought these notes to my attention sometime before she died in 1992, when they appeared very disarranged and incomplete. However, as I tried to put them together with the help of my brother, Furrokh, we came to realize that this, probably incomplete, set might function as a very introductory approach to the Gathas of Zarathushtra.

Several friends who looked at these lecture notes thought that short chapters on aspects of the Gathic text addressed to the non-scholarly public, and particularly to young Zoroastrians who had received little or no instruction on the Gathas, would serve a purpose. It was this encouragement that made me edit these notes, keeping almost all the original text intact and at the same time bring the set to completion. The notes were edited minimally where they seemed complete. Some details and continuous prose were supplied where necessary.

Extensive writing was called for where the notes provided just indications of ideas interspersed with Gathic quotations.

For the comments and encouragement I am particularly thankful to Dr. Lovji D. Cama, Dr. Pallan R. Ichaporia, Framroze K. Patel, Roshan Sethna and Zarine Weil.

This book is not, nor is it meant to be, a systematic introduction to the study of the Gathas. The chapters are brief exposition with comments on significant themes, and reflections on some episodes and religio-historical situations in the Gathas. Their purpose is to bring the reader closer to the thought and expression, the ideas, and the topics in the Gathas.

As my father had stated in his discussion of the Gathas, he wished readers would come to appreciate the religious and philosophical

vision of the Prophet expressed poetically in the Gathas, and the spirituality underlying its ethical message. It was the hope of my mother, as it is of my brother and myself that this short book may lead to such appreciation.

Invaluable help in preparation of the typescript came from my brother, Furrokh, and my esteemed friend Framroze K. Patel.

The City College of New York New York, NY.

Kaikhosrov D. Irani

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INTRODUCTION. THE GATHAS OF ZARATHUSHTRA. K. D. IRANI

WHAT ARE THE GATHAS?

The Gathas are the hymns composed by Zarathushtra, the Prophet or the founder of the religion of ancient Iran, who lived around 1300 BCE. The verses are composed in the metrical forms of ancient Indo-Iranian religious poetry. It is in a very condensed style of versification, in which standard grammatical construction is more absent than present. In extent the Gathas constitute a small book containing about 6000 words, in about 1300 lines set in 238 verses which are collected in 17 chapters, each called a Haiti, or in the more usual later term, HA. The 17 Ha's of the Gathas were, some time later, incorporated into a long prayer, or liturgy, recited at a ceremony. The Yasna recitation has 72 chapters. The Ha's are identified by their numberings as chapters of the Yasna. There are five major sections of the 17 Ha's of the Gathas listed here:

- I **Ahunavaiti**, consisting of Ha's 28-34 of the Yasna, containing 100 verses.
- II **Ushtavaiti**, consisting of Ha's 43-46 of the Yasna, containing 66 verses.
- III **Spenta Mainyu**, consisting of Ha's 47-50 of the Yasna, containing 41 verses.
- IV **Vohu Khshathra**, consisting of Ha 51 of the Yasna, containing 22 verses.
- V **Vahishto Ishti**, consisting of Ha 53 of the Yasna, containing 9 verses.

The language of the Gathas is one belonging to the old Indo-Iranian group which was part of the Eastern families of the Indo-European languages. This language is called Gathic, and because it is incorporated into the Yasna scripture which is part of the Avesta, it is also called Old Avestan. Much of our grasp of the Gathic language, both in vocabulary and grammar comes from its close affinity with the early form of Vedic Sanskrit.

THE CONTENT OF THE GATHAS.

The verses of the Gathas are addressed to the Divinity, Ahura Mazda, and also to the public that has come to hear the Prophet.

Specific aspects of his theology appear in every Ha, but we do not have a systematic presentation of the doctrine in any one location. Zarathushtra expounds aspects of his teachings in many different places in the Gathas. In others, he exhorts his audience to live a life as Ahura Mazda has directed. From these frequent passages we can reconstruct the theology with reasonable accuracy. Then there are some verses devotional in character, addressed to Ahura Mazda, to the divine essences of Truth, the Good-Mind, and the Spirit of Piety and Benevolence. There are also verses which refer to episodes and crises in the mission of the Prophet. But the theology is interwoven in every Ha.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE GATHAS.

It is important, as a preliminary consideration, to note that the type of religion preached by Zarathushtra is what may be called reflective religion. It is a fusion of a View of the World and a Way of Life offered to the prospective believer to be adopted upon due reflection as worthy of acceptance. A believer is one who chooses to encounter the world as the religious view declares it to be, and importantly, commits himself, or herself, to the Way of Life presented therein.

What then is the religious view of Zarathushtra in the Gathas? Zarathushtra conceives of the world we live in as a theater of conflict between two diametrically opposed moral spirits (*mainyus*), they stand for mental attitudes in the psychological domain, and also opposing moral vectors in all of creation. They are the Spirit of Goodness (*Spenta Mainyu*), and the Spirit of Evil (*Angre Mainyu*, not so named in the Gathas, but in the later literature). Their characters are defined in relation to the pivotal concept of Zarathushtra's theology, *Asha*, usually translated as Truth. Truth in this context means the Ultimate Truth, that is, the Ideal form of existence of the world as envisioned by Ahura Mazda. The form the world would have had but for the Spirit of Evil, and hence the form the world ought to have. Acting in accordance with Truth is the right thing to do, hence *Asha* is also translated as Righteousness. Indeed, since Zarathushtra's theology is always projected with a moral dimension, *Asha* always carries the joint meaning of Truth and Righteousness.

Thus we comprehend the world as an intrinsically good, divine creation, contaminated by evil, but capable of being perfected by the actions of humans by reason of their capacity of moral choice. Human action can promote good and reject evil leading to its ultimate banishment from the world, though it may continue to exist as a conceptual possibility.

From this follows the Way of Life in Zarathushtra's theology. According to it, each human being possesses, perhaps cultivated to different degrees, the quality of the Good-Mind, **Vohu-Mana**, in itself a divine creation. The Good-Mind enables us to grasp Asha, the Ideal Truth; it also enables us to see any aspect of the world and recognize it for what it is, i.e. the way and the extent to which it is flawed. This is grasped by seeing reality and realizing how it deviates from its ideal state, i.e. Asha. This form of moral awareness is what is termed good-thought. From this good-thought one is inspired to do the right thing, to right the wrong, to perfect the state of imperfection. When the appropriate course of action is formulated and articulated it is called good-word.

The inspiration that leads to action is **Spenta Armaity**, translated in the religious context as Piety or Devotion, and in the moral context as Benevolence or Right-Mindedness. This spirit is another aspect of Divinity, it inclines us to move from right conceptions to right actions. We thereby, with courage and confidence put our well-thought-out and well-formulated intentions into actions. This is called good-deed. Here we can crystallize the oft-repeated trilogy of Zoroastrianism, **Good-thoughts, Good-words, and Good-deeds**.

The consequence of actions according to this way of life is that being in accord with Asha it brings the world toward perfection in any way and to whatever extent it may be. In the social world we bring about a change toward a worthy social order. And as the social order is transformed to an ideal form we achieve the ideal dominion in which the right-minded person is happy and contented. This ideal social state is referred to by the Gathic term **Khshathra Vairya**, another divine aspect.

The individual who lives in accordance with this way of life reaches a state of well-being, a state of psychic and spiritual integrity which one might plausibly characterize as perfection in this earthly state. This state is referred to by the Gathic term **Haurvatat**. A person who has lived such a life comes, upon death, to a state of immortal bliss, known by the Gathic term **Ameretat**.

Life after death in the Gathas is viewed as a state, the character of which is a consequence of the moral quality of one's life. The notion of the final judgment upon the person is expressed dramatically in the crossing of the Bridge of the Separator (chinvad peretu), where the virtuous cross to the Abode of Songs, the heavenly abode, and exist in a state of "Best Consciousness." The wicked fall away into the House of Falsehood, existing in a state of "Worst Consciousness," detached from Truth.

The focus of Gathic teaching is one of a world afflicted with suffering, inequity, and imperfection, the goal being to transform it and bring it to perfection, that is, in consonance with Truth, by the comprehending power of the Good-Mind. Such a perfecting world would progressively bring satisfaction to all the good creation. And it would inaugurate the desired kingdom, Khshathra Vairya, where the ideal society would manifest peaceful social existence in which all interests would be harmonized and balanced in a just order, for that is an implication of Asha. This achievement depends on enlightened human thinking and right-minded human resolve. These are the religious goals according to the Gathas, and bringing them about, the commandment of Ahura Mazda.

THE NON-THEOLOGICAL CONTENT OF THE GATHAS.

The Gathas are religious hymns. Among them are some addressed to Ahura Mazda expressing the Prophet's veneration for the Holiness of the Divinity, who is Father of the Good-Mind, the Truth, and the Spirit of Benevolence. There are other verses where the Prophet requests for himself and his disciples these very gifts which would enable them to lead holy lives.

There are other verses which are quasi-biographical. They are all related, in one way or another, with Zarathushtra's mission to announce to humanity the teachings of Ahura Mazda to direct us to act in the Great Cause, viz., to promote the Truth (Asha), perfecting the World and thereby perfecting ourselves. When he announces the message of Ahura-Mazda, he is repudiated in his homeland, abandoned by his kinsmen.

There are verses which express this repudiation and the resulting doubts regarding the success of his mission. He asks for assurance from Ahura Mazda, and significantly, sees the self-validating power of Truth through the translucence of the Good-Mind. There are times when the Prophet is rejected by the powerful, and times when his teachings are attacked. He asks not only for his effort's confirmation from Ahura Mazda, but also the repudiation of his opponents and oppressors as purveyors of evil.

Since the various Ha's of the Gathas were composed at different periods in the life of the Prophet we obtain from them reflections of his , aspirations and anxieties about the effectiveness of his mission. He never doubted its validity or its ultimate vindication. We find that in the later part of his life he feels assured of success and a tone of contentment and assurance pervades the later compositions. But even there, as in the last Ha, where he officiates at the wedding of his

youngest daughter, he enunciates parts of me doctrine; he could not be any other than the untiring preacher of the religion of Mazda.

NOTES ON GATHIC TERMS AND THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Since many of the theological concepts appear from time to time in their Gathic terms in the translations of the verses, they are listed here together with other Gathic concepts with their meanings, in their proper groupings:

Ahura Mazda meaning the Wise Lord, is the Divinity of Gathic theology. He is the Creator and the Source of Goodness.

The two opposed Spirits. Principles, or Mentalities.

i) **Spenta Mainyu**, meaning the bountiful or progressive spirit. In the ethical dualism, it is the Good-Spirit.

ii) **Angre Mainyu** is the spirit of destruction or opposition. In the doctrine of ethical dualism it is the Evil Spirit. Although the concept is used, this term itself does not appear in the Gathas. It was employed a little later in the Avestan literature.

The **Amesha Spentas**, (again, the term not used in the Gathas, but very early in the history of the religion) means the bountiful immortals. They are six abstract concepts, essences as some would say, in terms of which the theology is constructed. They are aspects of Ahura Mazda, through which He is known. Ahura Mazda establishes their independent existence in the ideal realm of being. Sometimes they are personalized and venerated as such in the Gathas. Sometimes Ahura Mazda is characterized as their father. Some of these essences we can incorporate in our own lives, e.g. the Good-Mind, and Piety or Benevolence. Others are to be viewed as ideals which may be actualized in concrete existence by the actions of right-thinking humans. Here we should note that the distinction between an ideal realm of existence, and a physical realm of existence is made in the Gathas.

The six Amesha Spentas are the following:

i) **Asha Vahishta**: The Highest (Best) Truth, also the Highest form of Righteousness. This Truth describes how the World ought to be in its ideal form. Consequently the intention to actualize it is Righteous Intention, and action according to it the highest form of Righteousness.

ii) **Vohu-Mana**: The Good-Mind. The mental capacity to comprehend Asha, to understand the nature of our actual world, and recognize the resulting disparity between the ideal and the real. It is

thus the instrument of moral cognition.

iii) **Spenta Armaity**: The Holy Attitude. Theologically, it is the attitude of Piety toward the Source of Being and the Ultimate Truth; Ethically, it is the attitude of Benevolence, a concern for the Good. It may be characterized as Right-Mindedness.

iv) **Khshathra-Vairya**: The Ideal Dominion. It is the ideal social (and political) structure of the human world. In human terms, we may call it the ideal society. In theological terms, it is the Kingdom of Heaven.

v) **Haurvatat**: The state of complete Well-being, physical and spiritual integrity. In its full form it is a state of perfection on earth.

vi) **Ameretat**: The state of Immortal Bliss.

Sraosha: The concept of Hearing, i.e. receiving a divine message; however, since what is heard is a communication from the Divinity, the concept also implies acceptance or obedience.

There are three non-theological terms which appear in several of the Gathic verses, they are **Kavi, Karpan, and Usig**. They are all used in a pejorative sense. In Gathic vocabulary, Kavi meant a chief of a tribe, or a prince, a ruler and military chief of the socio-political organization among the Indo-Iranians. Karpan meant a mumbling priest, a priest whose function was to utter sacred words, usually not comprehensible to the laity, which were supposed to have magical effects in promoting the interest of the rulers. Usig was probably the ritual performing priest who prepared, and executed the sacrifice and offerings. These were activities of the cults prevalent in Zarathushtra's time, cults which he repudiated and displaced with the religion of Ahura Mazda.

I. THE ADVENT OF ZARATHUSHTRA. HA 29

In the Holy Gathas there is a striking set of passages giving a highly poetic picture of the advent of Zarathushtra in this world with His Divine Mission. Remembering the fact that the age of the Gathas is certainly over 3,000 years ago – and probably the date may yet be put back further to a more distant past – we realize while studying these passages the justification for the statement that Zarathushtra was not only one of the earliest of the Great Prophets of civilization, but was also one of the earliest of its Great Poets.

Yasna 29, which is the 2nd chapter of the Gathas, gives us this beautiful picture. At that time the pioneer Aryan peoples with their emerging culture could hardly settle down on the outskirts of their ancient home on the borders of Europe and Asia when barbarous Scythians would come down like a whirlwind and destroy their settlements. Not only did these pioneers suffer at the hands of the barbarous tribes living in the North and East, they were also tom by internal dissensions among warring groups within. The world then was torn to pieces by its factions, by the unending strifes among its warring peoples, plagued with ills and evils, knowing no rest, no joy, no peace!

Zarathushtra looked at the world as we look at it today. The poor are left in their distress without a helping hand. The rule is of might, and right is abandoned. Violence was rampant, and strife with the threat of destruction brought the pathos of human existence to the minds of those with a conscience, as much as it does today. What could the world do then as it does 3,000 years after Zarathushtra but wail and moan.

With poetic imagination, coupled with prophetic vision, Zarathushtra imagines the whole of creation, through its typified soul, uttering a cry of complain to the Lord of creation Himself. As in the court of a King surrounded by his ministers and advisers, the Prophet-Poet imagines the Soul of Creation taking the complaint to the court of the Lord, sitting in converse with the Holy Immortals, Asha, the Spirit of Truth, and Vohu-Mana, the spirit of the Good Mind, Divine attributes of the Lord poetically personified. Sick of the strife, distraught with woes, yearning for rest and peace, the Soul Of Creation articulates its complaint. It wonders why it was created at all; and when created, why should it have been so ill-fashioned. It groans and complains that it is tom by feuds and furies with no one to protect it and give it shelter from woe. It therefore appeals for the blessing of rest and peace from the Creator in Heaven. The passage

runs as follows:

(Ha 29.1)

Unto Thee, O Lord, the Soul of Creation cried:-

“For whom didst Thou create me, and who so fashioned
me?”

Feuds and fury, violence and the insolence of might have
oppressed me,

None have I to protect me save Thee,

Command for me, then, the blessing of a settled, peaceful
life.”

Look around you for the present and think for a moment, had the Soul Of Creation an equally potent voice now would it not cry an appeal to the Supreme Being in the same strain today?

How fervently would we in the 20th century, if we were allowed such an audience, go from the councils of the World to the court of the Lord and pray in the self same words as Zarathushtra put into the mouth of the world thousands of years ago?

When the world is so complacently unconcerned about its own wickedness, how shallow appears the veneer of our civilization. How easily can we be pessimistic about human nature, when centuries after Zarathushtra and Buddha, Moses, Jesus, and Confucius, we are yet in the same plight. The world bathed in blood a few years ago, and yet Might rules and Right goes begging. Salvation is not at the Councils of the World, it is in the ancient wisdom of the Sages, if only one would care to discern it.

The Lord Ahura, hearing this appeal is poetically represented in the next verse as turning to his Divine Counselor, the Holy Asha, the Spirit of Truth, addressing an enquiry, just as a king would turn to his Prime Minister for some information. He enquires of Asha if there is a reigning sovereign or a mighty chief who would stop this feud, smite back the forces of evil, and with wisdom and zeal establish peace and goodwill on earth. So in the second verse Zarathushtra fills in this picture and says:

(Ha 29.2)

Thereupon, the Lord Ahura said to Truth:

“Whom wilt Thou have as a Chief for the World to be its
protector and its ruler,

Who with sagacity and zealous energy, may bring

prosperity to the world,

Whom wilt Thou have as its Lord, who may curb violence
and dispel the forces of evil.”

And indeed in these questions how well is it presaged that prosperity could only be restored through peace, and zealous energy and zealous action are the only precursors of everything good. But even the Holy Asha is not aware of any such mighty Lord who would help in the fruition of the lofty plans of Providence. For, only one possessing the spiritual knowledge, realizing the reality of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, would know and appreciate His plans and help the world in its evolution towards the goal of perfection. Asha expresses this view and ends the verse by giving assurance that he as the embodiment of the spirit of Truth and Righteousness, of Law, and the Order of Cosmic Creation, will give his help to anyone who yearns for it. And verily, whomsoever the spirit of Truth helped would surely be the most powerful man on earth.

(Ha 29.3)

And thus to the Lord, doth Truth reply:

“I know no chief who can the world shelter from woes;

I know none who knows what moves and works Thy lofty
plans,

The strongest of being is he, to whose help I will go on an
invocation.”

In the next verse Asha continues his reply. He appeals to Mazda as the One who knows all, as the One who knows what wrongs have been wrought in the world by evil men in the past, and will be rendered by their successors in the future, to decide this question Himself. For really Lord Ahura is the discerning Judge. Then ends the verse with the phrase now known to all the world, but first so beautifully spoken by Zarathushtra, namely “Thy will be done.”

(Ha 29.4)

Mazda knows best what works have been wrought by the
followers of evil and by moral men;

And He knows best what shall be wrought by them ever
hereafter;

The Lord Ahura is the discerning Judge;

To us, let it be, as He shall will.

In the following verse Zarathushtra emphasizes the fact that the

appeal that had gone out from the Soul of Creation had not only the support of Holy Asha, but that his own soul was also joining in the appeal. With hands outstretched they pray to the Divine Creator for a dispensation, they pray that the discerning good may not suffer at the hands of the evil, that destruction may not overtake the righteous. Here is the passage:

(Ha 29.5)

And thus, we two, my soul and the soul of creation,
 prayed with hands outstretched to the Lord,
 And thus, we two, urged Mazda with entreaties:
 “Let not destruction overtake the right-living,
 Let not the diligent good suffer at the hands of the evil.”

So now comes the great Appointment by Ahura Mazda. The Lord announces that He has appointed Zarathushtra to be the Leader for the welfare of the world, and for the benefit of the good and righteous. This appointment He makes because He says there is not a single secular chief or a spiritual lord in the world to whom He can assign this Great Duty.

(Ha 29.6)

Then thus spake Ahura Mazda, the Lord of knowledge
 and wisdom:
 “As there is not a righteous spiritual lord, or secular chief,
 So have I, indeed, as the Creator, made thee,
 Zarathushtra, the leader,
 For the welfare of the world and its diligent people.”

Then a verse intervenes, which as usual in the Gathas, puts a question that suggests its own answer. It says that the Holy Songs emanate from the Divine Lord Himself, and His Holy Spirit of Truth. It says further that the Divine Word has been given for the welfare of mankind. And then there comes the question, which as we say answers itself, Zarathushtra inquires of Him as to whom He has ordained to give to the world these two bounties, namely, His Divine Word, and the world’s well-being consequent upon it. The answer is obvious. The person is Zarathushtra as confirmed soon after by Ahura Mazda Himself.

(Ha 29.7)

The wise Lord with the Spirit of Truth, made these holy
 hymns,

The benevolent Providence gave this Divine Word for the well-being of the world and its righteous people.

Whom hast Thou, O Mazda, ordained verily to give forth, through the Good Mind, these two bounties to mortals?

Thereupon Ahura Mazda speaks forth. He declares that Zarathushtra is not only known to Him but is known as the one having hearkened to His Holy Directions. And as Zarathushtra is willing to be the bearer of Divine Message for the sake of Truth, He will bestow on Zarathushtra the gift most fitted for His Divine Mission and that is “The Charm of Speech” (the power of persuasive speech).

(Ha 29.8)

And thus spoke Ahura Mazda:

“The one who alone has hearkened to my command and is known to me is Zarathushtra Spitama.

For His Creator and for Truth, he wishes to announce the Holy Message,

Wherefore shall I bestow on him, the charm of speech.”

A dramatic surprise however, is in store for us. For this Divine Announcement is received in a startling manner by the Soul of Creation. It knows how fallible human nature has been and will ever be. The passage that follows depicts the world as having been disappointed at the appointment of an humble man, instead of a war lord; a righteous but a weak man with no more force at his command than an inspired tongue. The passage very clearly shows on one hand the humility of Zarathushtra, and on the other hand the faulty, the too prevalent but faulty, notion of the people of the world that a mighty leader with his sword was to be preferred to a prophet with His message; that might was greater and more forceful than Right.

(Ha 29.9)

Thereupon the Soul of Creation cried:

“In my woes I have obtained for help the faint voice of an humble man,

When I had wished for a mighty overlord.

Whenever shall I get one to give me help, with power and with force?”

Over three thousand years have passed since the path of Truth and Right, leading to the desired goal, was pointed out in words, clear and

moving, by Zarathushtra. Thereafter we have had similar teachings by successive Holy Prophets in different lands. After all these teachings, after all the knowledge and experience, which it has received and hoarded, the world stands now in a hardly better condition than it did in that distant past. For on the force of arms it would still rely, even today. And among the culprits are those who profess to be the followers of the Prince of Peace! What an irony of fate! With the message of love on His lips Christ died on the cross. Do the Christian nations hear!

Zarathushtra then humbly accepts the command and starts on his career with one hope, with one object and aim, namely to bring rest, joy and happiness to the ailing and wailing world. He invokes the help of Ahura Mazda for that purpose in these moving words.

(Ha 29.10)

O Ahura Mazda, O Spirit of Truth,
 Do ye grant me and my followers such authority and
 power.
 That with the help of the Benevolent Mind,
 we may bring to the world, restful joy and happiness.
 Of which, Thou, O Lord, art indeed the first Possessor.

Starting on his mission, Zarathushtra rises and beseeches the Great Father to bless him with the very attributes which are His own, namely the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Good Mind and the spirit of Holy Power. These he claims to be his own for the sake of Great Dispensation, for the fulfillment of the Great Trust.

(Ha 29.11)

When shall Truth, The Good Mind, and Holy Sovereignty,
 hasten to me, O Lord!
 Do Thou assign them to me for the sake of the Great
 Dispensation.
 And verily grant now to us, Thy devoted servants, Thy
 gracious help for this Great Cause.

And for a forgetting world, sublimely did Zarathushtra fulfil His mission. The torch of Truth and Right he lit, has ever since stood as the beacon light, as the light, unchanging, the world to guide.

II. THE INITIAL INVOCATION. HA 28 AND RELATED HYMNS

In the dark and distant past, when the two branches of the Aryan People in Central Asia were awaiting the dawn of civilization, Zarathustra was born in ancient Iran. His message to the world is contained in his Immortal Gathas; immortal for the moral sublimity of its thoughts, its clarity, and the ever relevant practical philosophy it contained of a useful, active and good life, such as would really make the world, to use Zarathushtra's own words, "progress towards perfection."

The Gathas in Yasna 28, open with a verse, the simplicity of which, with its altruistic object and stand-point, practically give us the key, to the contents of the rest of the Holy Songs.

In this opening verse, Zarathustra with all humility and earnestness, makes an appeal to the Wise Lord in Heaven, for assistance, through His Most Benevolent Spirit. Perhaps it was the time of Spring and the world, pulsating with fresh life after the snowy winter in Iran, appeared to the Prophet, as being full of joy. At any rate his heart was filled with the joy of life, the joy we all feel when of a sudden we come in tune with the Infinite.

With this feeling of Divine inspiration Zarathushtra expresses a wish, a profound wish. He asks for the gift of righteousness in action, and he prays for the wisdom the Good Mind can give. And all this for no personal gratification that the gift could bring to him. With the noblest of aspirations, he invokes the Lord that he may bring joy to all the people of the world, or, to use his own poetic words, to the very Soul of Creation.

(Ha 28.1)

In humble adoration, with hands outstretched, I pray to Thee, O Mazda!

Through Thy benevolent Spirit
Vouchsafe to me in this hour of joy,
All righteousness of action, all wisdom of the Good Mind,
That I may thereby bring joy to the Soul of Creation.

In the next verse Zarathushtra in his poetic way takes us practically to the First Beginning of all things. He begins with the Wise Creator and His thought of clothing the glorious Heavens in light. His Thought becomes His Word, and His Word is Creation.

Zarathustra further describes Him as the Creator of the eternal principle of Truth and Right, an attribute which is part and parcel of the Divine Being. This principle, Zarathushtra says is enunciated to enable us mortals to be virtuous, a quality we come to possess and maintain through the Good Mind, another Aspect of the Divinity. He realizes, then the attribute of the unchangability of God, and addressing Him as “ever-the-same-Ahura,” he asks Him to bless the whole world by His bountiful Spirit.

(Ha 31.7)

He who, in the first beginning, thus thought :
 “Let the glorious heavens be clothed in light.”
 He, by His supreme Understanding, created the principle
 of Truth and Right,
 Enabling mortals thereby to maintain it through the Good
 Mind;
 O Wise Lord, O ever-the-same Ahura, by Thy Holy Spirit
 make these realms flourish.

Next we come to Zarathushtra’s realization of that which he may receive from the Lord, the most precious fulfillment of our highest aspiration, the Truth, and the blessings that come with it. Here it is:

(Ha 43.2)

And may we have the best which the Lord bestows,
 As we strive for the Light, may we attain it.
 Through Thy Most Holy Spirit, O Mazda
 Inspire us with Truth, revealed through the Good-Mind
 And bless us with things good, for all the days of a long
 life.

And he further realizes that this is not a private revelation, it is to be taught to others. That was to become the mission to which Zarathushtra dedicated his life. This is what we read in the following verse.

(Ha 43.3)

He who teaches others the righteous path of truth and
 happiness,
 Both in the material world and also in the spiritual,
 The path leading to Thy Abode, O Lord;

He attains an end better than good.

An enlightened helper, a faithful worthy of Thee, is he, O
Mazda!

The realization has come. The full Revelation the Prophet knows or feels is about to come. For this work in future, Zarathushtra feels that he needs the help of all the divine favor and support that he may get; and he thus offers three short prayers in the following verse.

To the spirit of Truth, he prays for the first blessing and that is “the blessing which is the fruit of the Good Mind.” Imagine the moral grandeur, and the character of a person who considers that the fruit and the result which the possession of a Good Mind brings to a man, (viz. Wisdom of Understanding the Truth and the Peace of Righteousness) is one of the most cherished blessings to be wished for. And this moral sublimity at a time when history loses its threads in the darkness of an ancient past.

He then appeals to the Spirit of Piety and Benevolence to grant him and one of his earliest followers, King Vishtaspa, their cherished desires, namely, to propagate the Great Faith; and thirdly, he implores the Great Master in Heaven to bring to fruition his hope that with the holy words of revelation on his lips he may be able to make the people of the world hear the Enlightening Message of the Lord.

(Ha 28.7)

Grant me, O Truth, the blessing which is the fruit of the
Good Mind;

Grant me, O Piety, to me and to Vishtaspa, our cherished
desires,

And Grant, O Mazda, Sovereign Lord, that reciting

Thy holy words of revelation, I may make Thy felicitous
Message heard.

As a practical man of the world, Zarathushtra realizes too keenly that his efforts for establishing the Supremacy of Right, will be resisted by the forces of Evil. A fervent prayer, therefore, goes up from him in the following verse, in which he asks the “Eternal Spirit of Life” to come to him, to come to him through the Good Mind that he possesses, to come to him with all the strength and support which Truth and Righteousness can give. And then he beseeches the gracious help of the Lord to enable him unmask, expose, and thus dispel, all evil, thereby to overcome at last the wrongs of the evil-doers.

(Ha 28.6)

Come Thou, O Eternal Spirit of Life;
 Come through the Good Mind;
 Come, with Thy gifts of Righteousness;
 Grant unto Zarathustra and to us Thy gracious help, O
 Mazda,
 Whereby we may overcome the evil of the wrong-doers.

To overcome all evil, what does Zarathustra do with himself and his followers ? He asks Mazda and the Spirit of Truth to bless him with the strength of spiritual power. With that gift he says he will bring joy and happiness to the whole world. He is confident of doing this with the help of the great and divine Key to Happiness, viz. the Good Mind. He would make people realize the value, splendor and power of the blessings of the Good Mind.

He would make them cultivate it and then let them themselves realize the great Joy and Happiness which come through the acquisition of the Truth the divine Joy and Happiness, the First Possessor of which is the Great Creator Himself.

(Ha 29.10)

O, Ahura Mazda, and Spirit of Truth,
 Grant these, my followers, such strength and Spiritual
 power,
 That with the help of the Good Mind they may bring to
 the world restful joy and happiness,
 Of which Thou, Lord, art indeed the First Possessor.

Now Zarathustra has made up his mind. He is the promoter of the cause of Truth, a fighter against the deceit of the Lie and the error of Untruth. His determination is unshakable. He is conscious of his power, the Heavenly powers bestowed on him, and he feels confident of reaching the goal. His determination makes him say that as long as he shall have power and strength he will teach all to search and seek for Truth and Right. And as a result, his confidence makes him announce that whoever accepted the gift of the Good Mind, and led his life according to its dictates would have his soul taken to Heaven, poetically called the "House of Songs".

(Ha 28.4)

I shall take the soul to the House of Songs, with the help

of the Good Mind;
Knowing the blissful rewards of the Wise Lord for
righteous deeds,
As long as I have power and strength, I shall teach all to
seek for Truth and Right.

For Good to overcome Evil, the world and its people must preserve and secure the principle of Righteousness, and the gifts of the Good Mind. Zarathushtra conscious of the challenge, which the forces of evil would invariably throw out to the forces of good, knew well the urgent necessity of preserving intact these high moral principles, taught by him to humanity. And this he says he will do by embodying them for all time in the Divine Songs of the Holy Gathas.

How wise has been his decision! How unailing has been his vision, and how true have his words proved: The mighty monuments of the Great Iranian Empire, extending from the Punjab in the South to the Ural Mountains in the North, from the borders of China in the East to Egypt in the West, are lying in the dust. The Golden Hall of Audience, a hall more vast and more magnificent than which has not existed, is now in ruins. The 12,000 hides on which the Holy Scriptures were inscribed, in letters of gold, preserved in the Royal Library at Persepolis, were all burnt to ashes by Alexander. Even the tomb of the Great Cyrus, who beseeched the coming generations not to grudge him the small space where he was lying in his tomb, was desecrated, robbed and stripped of all its contents and his remains are now where we know not. But the ravages of time, the wars and the revolutions of nations, the periodic cataclysms which convulse the world time and again, have left untouched the Great Principles Zarathushtra announced which he wove into songs and passed down to posterity by mouth. His prophecy was fulfilled. The moral world was preserved. The whole thinking world sees them as the ideals of the progressing world.

Then, before its wide promulgation Zarathushtra appeals to the Good Mind to inform him about the principles of existence of this earthly life which he calls the First Life. He asks the Lord to appear in His Spirit and give him that knowledge. He wishes to hear the Message in the Lord's own words, to enable him thereafter with confidence to approach the world and announce it to all mankind through these divine songs.

(Ha 28.11)

For evermore shall I preserve Righteousness and the
Good Mind for the people.

To enable me to apprise all, teach me, O Mazda,
In Thine own Spirit and in Thy words,
The principles of existence of this First Life.

III. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MESSAGE. The Oration in HA 30

People have come from near and from far to hear the message. The Prophet-poet has declared from the beginning that he has come not to put fear into the hearts of men, but to bring rightful joy to them. He is one of those wonderful message-bearers who do not wish people to engage in austerities or asceticism and withdraw from the world. He wants them to live a productive life full of joy in the world and bring joy to others. He tells us that this is a world of polarities. That from the very beginning, in the mental or spiritual sphere, the spirit of Good and the spirit of Evil co-exist, and between these two opposing principles we have to make our choice. Happiness depends on this fundamental and primary choice of our own. Therefore, for the cause of Truth, and for the sake of our own happiness he asks us to make the right selection. To be good, not base. Standing before the sacred fire, he addresses his hearers.

(Ha 30.1)

O ye, coming to seek knowledge, now shall I proclaim to
you, the messages of the wise Creator,
The hymns unto Ahura, and the prayer offerings of the
Good Mind,
The enduring sacred Truth, and the glorious vision of the
Heavenly Lights attainable through Truth sublime.

(Ha 30.2)

Hearken with your ears to these Best Counsels,
Reflect upon them with illumined judgment Let each
choose his creed, with that freedom of choice each
must have at Great Events,
Oh ye, be awake to these my announcements.

(Ha 30.3)

In the beginning there were two Primal Spirits,
Twins simultaneously active,
These are the Good, and the Evil, in thought, and in word,
and in deed.
Between these two, let the wise one choose aright,

Be good, not base.

(Ha 30.4)

And when these Twin Spirits came together at first,
 They established Life and the Denial of life,
 And so shall it be till the world will last.

The worst Existence shall be the lot of the followers of
 Evil,

And the Best-Mental-State shall be the reward of the
 followers of Good.

There follows an insightful passage depicting the adoption both by the good and the wicked, of one of the contrary principles. He who willingly adopts the wrong one, necessarily chooses to do the worst of actions. But he who chooses truth and right, to him the entire world is one of goodness and beauty. To him the heavens with their beautiful lights are a garment of goodness. Nature sings to him of well-being and kindness, and he does his righteous actions according to the plan of the Creator with faith in truth and right. For the true life of righteousness is one in which a man performs his actions, not in expectation of reward, but with perfect faith in the intrinsic value of Truth and Right. He is good because it is right and proper to be good.

(Ha 30.5)

Of these Twin Spirits, the evil-doer chose doing the worst,
 While the follower of the Holy Spirit of Goodness,
 clothing itself with the heavens for garment, chose the
 Truth,

And so will those who would please Ahura Mazda with
 righteous deeds, performed with faith in Truth.

And well does the prophet say that a person chooses to do the wrong things because he is wrong in his judgment and is deceived into believing that it is the more profitable course for him to adopt. Once this decision is made, the worst mind and not the benevolent mind becomes his guide, and deception and destruction become his aim.

(Ha 30.6)

Between these two Spirits the Evil worshippers could not
 discern aright,

To them deception came at the time of decision,

And they chose the worst mind.

With violence, then, they rushed together, Life in the world to destroy.

Now what can intervene between the wicked ones who makes the evil choice, and the good who make the right? The prophet has told us that the Truth gives us strength, that the Good Mind gives us the right use of power, and he once again assures us that humanity is not left without guidance and aid. The attributes of Truth, Good Mind, Holy Power, and, last but not least, Benevolence, Love and Kindness, do help those who have made the right choice. And indeed on the Day-to-come, when the test will be made, these very attributes will help one making the right choice to reach the hoped-for reward.

(Ha 30.7)

And to support this life, comes Armaity, the spirit of
Benevolent Piety,
With the gifts of Spiritual Sovereign Power, the Good
Mind, and Truth,
The everlasting Armaity, who gives to the righteous the
body unbending.
But the soul, as to time, the first cause among created
things, was with Thee, my Lord.

And so the prophet prays for himself, for all his hearers, and indeed for all mankind, that we may be like those who make the world prosper towards perfection. For then comes the day when all untruth disappears and truth conquers; and those of good fame are garnered up in the fair abode of the Good Mind and Truth.

(Ha 30.9)

So may we be like those making the world progress
towards perfection;
May the Lord and His Divine spirits help us and guide our
efforts through Truth;
For a thinking man is where Wisdom is at home.

(Ha 30.10)

Then truly cometh the blow of destruction on untruth;
And all those of good fame are garnered up in the Fair
Abode.
The Fair Abode of the Good Mind, the Wise Lord and
Truth.

This Ha has proclaimed the essence of Zarathushtra's conception of the world we are in, a world of good and evil. It also presents the religious commitment of the followers of his faith; to discern the Truth with the Good Mind, and act so that the vision of this Truth is actualized. We are inclined to do so by the spirit of Goodwill instilled in us.

A life so lived increases the Good in the world and diminishes Evil, it gives contentment of spirit, it also advances us toward the salvation of Best Consciousness in our spiritual journey. It is this view and this commitment that Zarathushtra asks us to choose after illumined reflection as the fundamental act of religious faith.

IV. ZARATHUSHTRA'S ADDRESS TO AHURA MAZDA FOR CONFIRMATION AND CALL FOR THE REGENERATION OF EXISTENCE. HA 34

This HA must have been composed at a time in the middle of Prophet's ministry. He has already proclaimed the fundamental teachings of the religion. After some difficulties, the religion has been adopted by King Vishtaspa and his court, and has spread among some of the Iranian tribes. But there are still some who have not accepted the religion and are engaged in the traditional cults of sacrifice and warfare. These are the old cults associated with social practices of raids and depredation, which are repugnant to Zarathushtra's eyes. Knowing what Ahura Mazda expects from the pious believers, the Prophet assures the Lord of their faithful adherence. He also explains his rejection of the unbelievers, and repudiates their evil ways. But above all, he seeks confirmation of the way of life he has received from Ahura Mazda, and the hope of the regeneration of existence with appropriate recompense for the good and evil.

The offering of faith to Ahura Mazda is to live by the principles He has declared. In such a life Zarathushtra asks for the Lord's protection and support. Later on there are some very moving verses where Zarathushtra asks the Lord how we may worship him, how we may learn and teach all to promote the Great Cause, that is, The Path of Renovation and the Perfection of Existence leading to Immortal Bliss. All along the verses of this Ha there is a constant sense of a deep religious dedication to the Lord and expression of veneration for the Divinity who has given humanity the religion of the Good Life.

The Ha opens with a dedication. The two aspects of life which come to the person who has lived a life of good words, deeds, and worship are Haurvatat and Ameretat, meaning respectively, the Perfection of Integrity, and Immortality. These are of course, characteristics of the Divinity as are all the Amesha Spentas. The actions which lead to them are offered as dedication to Ahura Mazda.

(Ha 34.1)

The deeds, the words, the worship
For which Thou hast established
Immortality, Righteous existence, and the Kingdom of
Perfection;
All these deeds and words and worship

I dedicate first of all to Thee, O Mazda.

We satisfy Ahura Mazda by our living good lives, that is, actions according to Asha grasped through the Good-Mind. This itself is a religious act. In making the moral life a form of worship, Zarathushtra has come to be considered a pioneering religious moralist. Another kind of worship is one commonly recognized as act of reverential speech, or singing of hymns of praise and veneration. The intertwining of these two forms, namely, of dedicatory invocation and righteous action, is a characteristic of this Ha.

Just as in the previous verse we saw the combination of deeds, words, and worship, so in the next verse actions of the good spirit in accordance with Truth are combined with singing hymns of Ahura Mazda's praise.

(Ha 34.2)

Inspired by the Good Mind these deeds come . from the
good spirit of the virtuous man,

Whose soul follows the path of Truth.

He approaches Thy presence, O Mazda, singing hymns of
Thy Praise.

The moral theory in the religious conception is ever present. Even when the focus is on reverential praise, it is addressed to the moral aspects of Ahura Mazda, that is the Truth, the Good-Mind, and Piety or benevolence. There is a constant concern with the success of the religious vision, namely the promotion of the good and the frustration of evil, Reflect on the prayer of the next two verses.

(Ha 34.3)

To Thee and to Truth we tender our offerings of
reverential adoration.

In Thy Kingdom may all the living achieve their
destiny of perfection through the good-Mind.

For, indeed, the advancement to Thy exalted presence is
forever secure among those who approach with Good-
Will.

(Ha 34.4)

Thy sacred fire, O Ahura, mighty through Truth, most
swift and powerful,

May its helpful radiance be a bringer of joy to the good;

But for the malicious wicked, may its power their evil disclose!

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Prophet was living in a period of uncertainty regarding the wide promulgation of the faith. The practitioners of the earlier cults were still around; their clergy and nobility doing their best to impede the spread of Zarathushtra's teaching. The Prophet and his disciples seek protection from these tribes of violent raiders. In such a frame of mind he addresses the next verse.

(Ha 34.5)

What is Thy power? What is Thy Domain? O Mazda,
How can one's actions justify Thy protection of us, Thy
humble followers?

Indeed, through Righteousness and the Good-Mind.

Thus we declare Thy exaltation to all – even to the the
powers of evil and the wicked destroyers among men.

The next verse is a moving poetic plea for reassurance.

Ha (34.6)

As Thou art truly thus, O Mazda

The very Being of Truth and the Good-Mind

Then give me a sign during this existence of mine,

That I may approach with confident joy, in veneration,
singing of Thy glory.

For Zarathushtra there is no source of enlightenment, guidance or protection except Ahura Mazda.

(Ha 34.7)

Where are those, O Mazda, with authentic enlightenment
of the Good-Mind,

Who even in times of woe would, standing by Thy
treasured doctrines, spread the light?

None do I know other than Thee,

Protect us, then, through Truth and Righteousness.

After these calls for confirmation of faith and expressions of dedication, Zarathushtra's thoughts turn to the enemies of the Faith. He informs his hearers and Ahura Mazda of their true nature which his faith has enabled him to recognize. This is given in the next two

verses.

(Ha 34.8)

For the evil foes by their hostile actions have spread fear,
 Misery and ruin have they brought on many.
 Unmindful of Thy commands the powerful oppose the
 weak, O Mazda!
 They think not, alas, of Truth and Right,
 From the Good-Mind they always remain afar.

(Ha 34.9)

Those who spurn the bountiful spirit of Piety Knowing
 how precious it is to Thine initiate,
 Wicked are they by their ignorance and neglect of the
 Good-Mind,
 From them Truth turns away, as from us flee the beasts of
 prey.

We are now presented with the clear contrast of a good human being, a faithful follower of the way of life prescribed by the Wise Lord.

(Ha 34.10)

The man of understanding will call for the deeds of the
 Good-Mind.
 A fruitful result of a faithful life.
 He who knows the zeal of Benevolent Armaity is a
 creative follower of Truth and Right,
 Which are indeed the mighty influences of Thy Kingdom
 of Heaven, O Mazda.

The Prophet declares to Ahura Mazda what he takes to be the consequences of a life lived virtuously, that understands the divine design. These consequences first accrue to the person of the good man; second, they lead to the blessed state of the Kingdom of the Good-Mind; third, they lead to the discomfiture of evil.

(Ha 34.11)

Thy twin spirits of Perfecting Integrity
 and Immortality sustain our aspiration!

The zealous benevolent Armaity, with Truth, shall ensure
the permanence of Thy Kingdom of the Good-Mind,

By these divine forces, O Mazda, dost Thou bless the foes
of Thy foes.

These were elements of the teachings that the Prophet had already proclaimed. Now he asks Ahura Mazda, possibly at critical moment in his ministry, what are His commandments, His wishes, what form of worship He wills. These inquiries, and the intensely personal tone of the next verse can be understood probably as Zarathushtra's need to be completely clear in the face of his opponents who were continuing with an archaic ritual system and a non-moral religion which Zarathushtra, under inspiration from Ahura Mazda, was intent on replacing. But notice that the fundamental teaching of the Prophet is reinforced in the last line.

(Ha 34.12)

What are Thy commandments, and what dost Thou
desire, O Mazda ?

What of invocation, what of worship ?

Speak forth, my Lord, that I may hear Thee !

That I may know what will bestow on us Thy Blessed
rewards.

Teach me through the Good-Mind the noble Path of Truth
and Right.

The theme of the last line is extended into the next two verses as completion of Zarathushtra's moral vision.

(Ha 34.13)

It is the Path of the Good-Mind which Thou hast
manifested to me, O Ahura !

Whereby the well-doers, in accordance with the teaching
of the Spiritual Guides, acting in harmony with Truth
alone,

Shall pass onward to the assigned reward of which Thou
alone art the bestower, O Mazda.

(Ha 34.14)

This precious reward of Thine, O Mazda,
Thou givest by way of the Good-Mind

Thou givest vigorous bodily life to him who works for and
tends to Thy creation,

Who furthers Thy beneficent plan by the power of his
understanding,

Guided by Thy Spirit of Truth.

And in this spirit of religious inspiration Zarathushtra asks for the essence of the divine teaching, and invokes The Lord to regenerate this imperfect existence bringing to realization the Great Cause.

(Ha 34.15)

Make known to me, O Mazda, the best teachings and
actions,

Actuated by the Good-Mind, and inspired by Truth,

As I express my aspiration in my songs of veneration for
Thee.

By Thy Sovereign Authority do Thou regenerate this
existence through Thy gracious Will,

O Ahura!

Consider the implications of the last two verses. In the previous verses the Prophet asks for directions for a way of life and a mode of worship. Here, he says, Ahura Mazda has made him aware of the Path, the Path of the Good Mind making one act in harmony with Truth. And in the next to the last verse (Ha 34.14) the Prophet tells us that Ahura Mazda grants the precious reward, through the Good-Mind, to enable us to work towards furthering the Divine Plan in this world, guided by the Spirit of Truth. Such is the mission of humanity according to the prophet's teachings.

Every religion offers a conception of the relation of humanity to divinity. In Zarathushtra's religious vision humanity, realizing the Divine Plan, works to implement it in the world. We, humans of goodwill, cooperate with the Divinity in bringing about the establishment of Truth. We are not viewed as estranged from God, nor servants paying worship to God, nor insignificant unworthy creatures, but the co-workers of God in the vindication of the Great Cause – bringing about the regeneration of the world towards its Divinely intended perfection.

V. THE QUESTIONS TO THE LORD: HA 44

The nature of existence, both material and spiritual, has been in the forefront of religious thought for ages. Questions concerning creation, terrestrial and celestial, concerning human nature and destiny, receive answers of one sort or another in most religious traditions. Among the ancient Aryan peoples there were various complex accounts covering these questions. Many of these beliefs the ancient Iranians shared with other groups of the Aryan peoples. The magnitude of Zarathushtra's religious transformation can be appreciated when we notice that he ignores this entire tradition. In his new religious vision the prophet raises these religious questions and addresses them to Ahura Mazda in Ha 44. Some of the questions the prophet answers himself, and some suggest answers obvious to all who would reflect. In the second verse of this Ha Zarathushtra asks for the source of the Best Existence, and who shall receive the blessed reward.

(Ha 44.2)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
What is the source of the Best Existence?
How shall one who seeks it receive the blessed
recompense?
Surely, such a holy one, through Righteousness,
Is a healer of existence, beneficent unto all,
A genuine friend, O Mazda.

In the next verse we find a strange mixture of questions. There is the highly abstract question: Who was the father of Asha, the Truth? The very next question is: Who determined the path of the sun and stars? And this is followed by, who arranged the moon to wax and wane. This combination strongly suggest an internal connection, namely, that the principles underlying natural phenomena, such as, the movements of the sun, stars and moon, are part of Asha, the Truth. This Truth is both the ideal moral as well as the natural order. And thus Ahura Mazda is recognized as the Creator of the Cosmos which is comprised of the natural and the social world. And since the understanding of the world lies in seeing how all things are ordered, it is Asha through which we understand and guide our lives. If existence was not ordered in accordance with an underlying truth we would be encountering chaos, not a cosmos. Zarathushtra discerns this and presents it to us practically, with a wish to know even more of this

existence.

(Ha 44.3)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
 In the beginning, who was the father and creator of Asha,
 the Truth?
 Who determined the paths of the sun and stars?
 Who, but Thee, so arranged the moon to wax and wane?
 This, O Mazda, and much more, I fain would know.

The next verse asks some further questions about the world, but now the abstract question that goes along with this inquiry is about the Good-Mind. This is the other divine attribute needed to understand existence, for Asha, the truth, is to be grasped by the divine gift of the Good-Mind. These are the first two of the six Amesha Spentas.

(Ha 44.4)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
 Who so balanced the earth and heavens to keep them
 apart?
 Who created the waters and the plants?
 Who yoked swiftness to the winds and motion to the
 clouds?
 Who, save Thee, is the creator of the Good-Mind,
 O Mazda?

Similarly, in the next verse there is an inquiry into the order of light and darkness, that is, day and night, this inquiry is related to another, regarding the creation of human activity alternating between sleep and wakefulness. These are not casual juxtapositions. Zarathushtra is making his audience aware of the divine design in which there is an intimate relation between the natural order of day and night and the human order of our lives, activity and rest.

(Ha 44.5)

This I ask Thee, tell me Truly, O Ahura;
 What great artificer created light and darkness
 What artificer produced the phenomenon of sleep and
 wakeful activity?

Who made the dawn, noon and night
Which call the enlightened to their duties?

At this point we come to the second part of this Ha, the questions turn from the creation of natural phenomena to the human world, the connection already made in the last verse.

But there is also a clear continuity in the progression, because having inquired about Asha (Truth) and Vohu-Mana (Good-Mind), the Prophet now asks about the next two Amesha Spenta, Armaity (Piety and Benevolence) and Khshathra Vairya (Ideal Kingdom).

In the first of the next two verses, He asks whether he is announcing the truth. He further asks whether the spirit of love, making men active and zealous, will make the world progress on the path of truth, and lastly he asks whether the foundation of Kingdom of Heaven, i.e., the Kingdom of Peace and Benevolence, is not properly based on the Good Mind.

In the following verse he again speaks about Armaity, the spirit of Piety and Benevolence and inquires why love and devotion have such a high position in the cosmic arrangement, and then ends with an extremely touching reflection on who but God has placed the love of a child in the heart of a parent.

(Ha 44.6)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
Whether what I now announce is verily the Truth?
Doth Armaity, with the piety of benevolence actualize
Truth by its action?
Doth Thy Kingdom of Heaven rest on the foundation of
Good Mind?
For whom hast Thou created this richly endowed world?

(Ha 44.7)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
Who established in her high station, blessed Armaity with
the pious and active mind?
Who with foresight put the love for the son in the father's
heart?
With these questions, for full knowledge,
I praise Thee, O Mazda, O Spirit Benevolent, O giver of all
things.

Then Zarathushtra questions Ahura Mazda about the great principles of the religion, about the Gathic Songs in which these principles are embodied and asks the Lord whether these Songs conveying the Truth will bring people to the religion. In the next verse he appeals to the Lord for reassurance on whether the great insight into existence given to him will be brought to perfection through him. The answer can be understood. It is reached in Verse 10, where Zarathushtra declares that it should prosper the whole world, and for all times, because it was based on Truth, and that through these Songs of perfect Realization and Devotion, all our actions would be in harmony with divine law and order, and justice.

That the goal and ideal of this religion was to realize the Divine through Truth, the Good-Mind, and Benevolent action. Finally he asks whether mankind will be able to rise to appreciate this religion and live by it.

(Ha 44.8)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
 What are Thy maxims, which I should meditate on, O
 Mazda?
 Which are the Divine Hymns, inspired by the Good Mind,
 I had asked for?
 What songs of Truth will bring me the allegiance of the
 people?
 How shall my soul partake of the Good that is ever on the
 increase?

(Ha 44.9)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
 How shall I bring to perfection and sanctify the
 insight into Faith, which Thou, the Lord of the Kingdom
 of Heaven, hast taught me with such exhortation?
 O Thou Possessor of Sublime Authority;
 O Thou who dwelt where Truth and the Good-Mind have
 their abode.

(Ha 44.10)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
 The religion that is the best of all that are,

The religion, which, based on Truth, should prosper all.
The religion which establishes our actions in order and
justice, by the divine songs of perfect Devotion,
Has for its intelligent desire, the realization of Thee, O
Mazda.

He then declares that he is the first elect to proclaim this religion of truth and announce it to people, He inquires that when the people accept it and follow it, how shall the spirit of piety and devotion come to their help, and finally ends by saying that the only religion is the religion of truth. He will look at everything false, wrong, and unjust as something to be rejected and deplored!

(Ha 44.11)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
To those to whom Thy Faith shall be announced,
How shall Armaity, the spirit of Devotion, with her active
mind, come to them O Mazda?
I, Thy devoted servant am the first elected to proclaim
Thy religion of Truth.
All else, I look upon as alien to the spirit.

In another interesting passage Zarathushtra had invited people to come and hear him, to put their questions, to reflect and discuss. He did not want that people should follow him, or anybody, blindly, with closed minds but wanted all to use their God-given minds to think and acquire the conviction to find the path of Divine Truth. He must have seen that some were genuinely asking questions to settle their own doubts, but possibly others had come only to find fault without an open mind. He therefore questions the Lord that among those who have come to question him, who comes with a heart full of malice and untruth, not in search of truth.

Here is a wise thought. How often do we find today when people ask questions and come to discuss the same, we too find that some are moved by a genuine desire to learn, while others come with closed minds only to find fault, desiring not understanding but abrasive opposition.

In verse 13 & 14 Zarathushtra asks for strength from the Lord to drive away the spirit of Untruth and Evil to the regions below where the unfaithful, the malevolent, and the liars reside. They are bad because they care not to listen to the voice of the Good-Mind.

So he continues in verse 14 and inquires how he may succeed in

delivering the lie into the hands of truth. This is a great thought, viz., that a lie can be destroyed only when the liars realizing the truth become truthful; therefore, they are to be taught the path of Truth. Thus, he says that lies will be destroyed by messages of the Holy Gathic Songs of Truth and Righteousness.

(Ha 44.12)

This I ask Thee, Tell me truly, O Ahura;
 Who among those with whom I discourse, is a righteous
 man and who a liar?
 With which of the two, is of the malevolent spirit of
 Untruth?
 Or is he himself the Liar who opposes Thy blessings?
 How is it that he is not thought to be the harmful Evil
 one?

(Ha 44.13)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
 How shall I drive away the spirit of Untruth, the lie-
 demon, from amongst us,
 To those beneath, the unfaithful and the disobedient;
 Who strive not to be the companions of Truth,
 Who care not to listen to the counsels of the Good-Mind.

(Ha 44.14)

This I ask Théé, tell me truly, O Ahura;
 How shall I deliver the Lie into the hands of Truth,
 When shall I smite her by the holy hymns of Thy True
 Faith?
 How shall I destroy the evil-liars before they attain their
 object.

These bring Zarathushtra again to the thought that eventually there must be a clash between the believers and the unbelievers and he asks which side will prevail. The answer is understood, because Zarathushtra says that Ahura Mazda of course wishes to maintain the principles of Truth and consequently he asks for an effective healer to protect the followers of the great Faith. He does not know who it will be, therefore he calls upon the Lord that whosoever may be the protector, may Sraosha the conveyor of insight, come to him with the

good mind and help in his struggles.

(Ha 44.15)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
If Thou dost rule through Truth and mean to protect me,
When the two hosts shall, clashing, come into conflict.
Then, for the principles of Truth, which Thou dost
desire to maintain,
To which of the two, wilt Thou give victory?

(Ha 44.16)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
Whom shalt Thou make victorious?
Who shall protect the principles of Thy Faith?
Designate clearly to me, whom dost Thou wish to see as
one that heals the world?
Then let Sraosha with the Good-Mind come to him, O
Mazda.
To him whom Thou wishest, whosoever he may be.

Then comes a remarkable passage in which Zarathushtra asks how his deep devotion may bring the Divine to him, when would he attain perfection in order to make his voice heard through these Divine Songs which receive their light from Truth? But he assuringly says that with the illumination of these Divine Songs, mankind can attain the two gifts, of Perfection in this world and Immortality in the next under his own (viz. Zarathushtra's) protecting leadership.

(Ha 44.17)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly O Ahura;
How can my deep devotion turn Thee to me?
How can I attain to thy Perfection, and make my voice
effective?
Through these Divine songs of mine which receive
their guiding light from Truth,
May all receive the two-gifts of Well-being and
Immortality under my protecting leadership.

A passage calling for some interpretation appears in verse 18. In

those times animal sacrifices were offered, a practice Zarathushtra condemned. It seems some gifts of horses and camels were promised to Zarathushtra, some sacrificing chiefs, learning the lesson from the Prophet, offered the same alive to Zarathushtra rather than sacrifice them in the ancient way. Thus he teaches mankind that rather than sacrifices, what we should really offer is our own achievement of Perfection and Immortality, viz. a perfect person and soul here and in the next world manifested to the Lord as a deserving dedication.

(Ha 44.18)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura How, indeed, shall
I earn the true reward through Truth and Right?

How shall I offer in Thy service the worldly gifts of
stallions and camels I get,

How shall I acquire Thine own two gifts announced to
me, of Healthful Weal and Immortality.

Then Zarathushtra comes once again to the Karpans, the mumbling magician priests of the evil-rulers, and the Usigs, the sacrificers. They did not give due recompense to poor and righteous laborers who earned it. Zarathushtra enquires of their punishment in this world, for he knows their state, hereafter. He ends this by asking the question, whether an evil-doer can ever be a good ruler. He can not possibly be, because he lives an unrighteous life, given to violence, not caring that the world may thrive through the cause of Truth;

(Ha 44.19)

This I ask thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;

He who will not give due recompense to the one, who well
earns it,

Even unto the Truthful man, who fulfills his word and
work What penalty should he pay first here?

For verily, I know well what he will get at last, hereafter.

(Ha 44.20)

Have the evil-doer ever been good rulers, O Mazda? Yea,
verily I ask of those who befriend them?

By their aid the Karpans and the Usig give the world up to
violence.

Through them the Kavis grow strong with raid and
rapine,

Caring not that the world should thrive through Truth's
law and progress.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE VINDICATION OF TRUTH. THE SERMON IN HA 45

Zarathushtra in the first verse of Ha 45 declares to all who have gathered before him that they should think over his words with clear thought, to come to their own considered decisions, and realize that the false teacher has been repudiated, his creed has been exposed. No more shall the teacher of untruth deceive and destroy the world.

This is an expression of great significance, for as one of the earliest teachers to light the torch of truth for the civilized world he lighted the way. to civilization through many traditions influenced by his ideas. The words therefore of Zarathushtra that no longer will the teacher of falsehood be able to destroy the world and prevent the promulgation of the principles of truth were a great prophetic expression.

In the second verse he lays down for all time the principle, that there can be no compromise between truth and untruth. There is no middle road between these two ways. Indeed he tells us that the spirit of Goodness announced to the spirit of Evil that in no way do the two ever agree.

In the third verse Zarathushtra lays down the doctrine of life, which he says was declared to him by Ahura Mazda himself, that those who will not follow the path of truth, in the message as declared by Ahura Mazda and recorded in the Gathas, will end in misery.

(Ha 45.1)

Hearken unto me, O ye, who come from near and from
far!

Listen unto me, for I shall speak forth now;

Ponder well over all things, weigh my words with care and
clear thought.

Never shall the False Teacher destroy this world for a
second time.

For his tongue stands mute, his creed stands exposed

(Ha 45.2)

I shall tell you now of the Twin Spirits, at the First
Beginning of Creation.

The holier of the two thus spake to the Evil one:

“Neither our thoughts nor our teachings,
“Neither our intelligence nor our beliefs,
“Neither our words nor our deeds,
“Neither our selves, nor our souls, ever agree.”

(Ha 45.3)

Now I shall tell you, of the First doctrine of life, which
Ahura Mazda, the All-knowing, declared to me;
Verily, those of you, who will not fulfill the message of
this word,
The Holy Word as I value and declare it,
For them shall the Last of Life be misery.

Then Zarathushtra articulates, in verse 4, that which is the best in life, as Ahura Mazda himself has declared, that is to follow the principle of Truth. Whatever the world might say, however harsh your circumstances, open your mind’s eye to the Truth, open your heart to the inner voice which guides you on that very path, and unflinchingly follow what you clearly recognize as true and right. Zarathushtra describes Ahura Mazda as the Father of the Good Mind the mind which comprehends and works toward promoting the social and the natural world to perfection. It is often called “the toiling good mind”. Furthermore Ahura Mazda is the creator of the spirit of Piety and Benevolence, Spenta-Armaiti, which he describes as good action and zeal. Naturally, because piety and benevolence bring zeal to a man or a woman and make him or her perform good actions for others. Finally Ahura Mazda is described as the one whom none can deceive.

In verse 5, he gives us the result of a life imbued with this great faith. Ahura Mazda declared to him that the best thing for one to hear and live by is His message of Truth with the consequences that such a one will arrive at perfection and immortality.

In verse 6, Zarathushtra refers to the greatest of all Beings and His message, centered on the spirit of Truth, which he realizes through the instruction of Vohu-Mana, the spirit of the Good Mind. He requests Ahura Mazda to continue to bless him with His wisdom and teach him what is best – a prayer which in this world of turmoil, we can address to Ahura Mazda to guide us by the light of wisdom.

(Ha 45.4)

I shall tell you now of what is best in this life,
That is to act in consonance with the spirit of Truth, the
Holy Asha,

As Mazda Ahura knows, who created him,
 Ahura Mazda, the father of the toiling Good Mind,
 Ahura Mazda, the father of Armaity, of good action and
 zeal.

Ahura Mazda, the all-seeing whom none can deceive.

(Ha 45.5)

I shall tell you now, what the most Holy declared to me,
 As the word that is best for mortals to hear and follow:
 “Those who shall be dedicated to me, and listen to My
 Word,,

Shall attain the blessings of Perfection and Immortality,
 for the actions of their Good Spirit.”

So said Ahura Mazda.

(Ha 45.6)

Thus do I announce the Greatest of all!

I weave my songs of praise for Him through Truth,
 helpful and beneficent to all that live.

Let Ahura Mazda hearken unto them with His Holy
 Spirit;

For the Good Mind instructed me to adore Him.

By his wisdom let Him teach me what is Best.

And he declares that for all, those who have lived and those who
 will live yet, just as there are only-two roads, of truth and untruth, so
 there are only two rewards – immortal joy hereafter for the righteous
 and the truthful, and misery and torment for the unrighteous and the
 liars.

(Ha 45.7)

Those who are living, those who have been, and those
 who are yet to be,

Shall attain one of the two awards He ordains.

In Immortality shall the soul of the Righteous be ever in
 Joy,

But in torment the soul of the Liar shall surely be.

And these laws has Ahura Mazda ordained through His

Sovereign Authority.

Here we come to a passage in which Zarathushtra declares his full realization of God. He says “with my very eyes I see the great Creator, the Lord of Good Spirit, the Lord of all goodness in thought, word and deed.” He says “I have come to realize Him and to know Him through the path of truth, and henceforth shall serve him with devotion and render Him the homage in the House of Songs.” This reminds us of how the Persian Sufi poets, like Hafez, centuries later describe their realization, that which their nation had learned from its sage and teacher, Zarathushtra Spitama.

(Ha 45.8)

With my songs of praise, with my dedicated worship, I
wish to serve my Lord.

For now, indeed, I see Him with mine own eyes, the Lord
of the Good Spirit, the Lord of Good Word and Deed.

I know Him through Truth, Him who is Ahura Mazda.
Verily, I shall render Him homage in the House of
Songs.

Having realized for himself the Divine Presence, the Supreme Creator – having declared his realization of Him to one and all, Zarathushtra proceeds in the next verse, to announce that it is He who is worthy of our worship, and He alone should we seek to satisfy, not merely by the offering of prayers, but by the actions of our Good Mind. Then Zarathushtra prays that He through His Supreme Authority may prosper our peasants and our workman, our herds and cattle, and bring welfare and prosperity to the country. Finally he asks that by prescribing the Holy Law of Truth for humanity to follow through the length and breadth of this earth, the Lord establish forever the Kingdom of the Good Mind among the people of the earth.

(Ha 45.9)

“Him with our Good Mind shall we seek to please

Who at His will maketh weal and woe for us,

May Ahura Mazda through His Sovereign Authority
prosper our peasantry, our workmen, and our herds.

And through the Holy Law of Truth, establish the rule of
the Good Mind among people.”

In the next verse Zarathushtra informs us of the eventual result of the acceptance of the law of Truth and the establishment of the Kingdom of the Good Mind by the people of the world. He assures us

that the Supreme Creator has ordained that perfection and healthful weal should be the lot of people in this life and immortality and bliss should be their lot in the Kingdom of Heaven, where the happy souls will abide in perpetuity in His House of Songs.

(Ha 45-10)

Him, with these our Songs of Devotion, we shall exalt, He,
 who is famed forever as Ahura Mazda, the wise
 Creator.

For verily, through His Spirit of Truth and the Good
 Mind, He has ordained That Healthful weal and
 Immortality shall be in His Kingdom of Heaven,

And effectiveness in perpetuity in His House of Songs.

In the final verse of this inspired sermon, Zarathushtra speaks of the relation of God as father to son, to everyone of His followers. The follower of Truth becomes the friend of God. Ahura Mazda is not represented as the Great Unapproachable; Zarathushtra assures His followers that He will be their brother and father.

Thus is the promise of the “Yatha-Ahu-Vairyo” prayer fulfilled.

(Ha 45.11)

Whose shuns the evil-liars and those who shun the Lord.
 Whose reveres Him, the most High through
 the Holy faith of his appointed Saviour,
 To him, O Mazda, Thou shalt be a friend, even brother
 and father!

VII. ZARATHUSHTRA'S REFLECTIONS ON HIS MISSION. HA 46

The verses of this Ha give us memories of the Prophet referring to the period of his first proclamation of the message of Ahura Mazda, the early difficulties, and acceptance of the faith by King Vishtaspa and his court. This early period was undoubtedly the most critical time in the life of the Prophet. Though some of the verses refer to various episodes, the central inspiration of this Ha is the holiness of a powerful religious vision accompanied by the conviction of its final establishment. The Ha opens with a recollection of Zarathushtra's difficulties. Not only has his mission been unsuccessful at the time, he is being deserted and rejected. He asks the Lord for help, continuing to announce with confidence the Divine teachings. The high point of this confidence, in the midst of adversity, comes in verse 10. Verse 10 and 11 form a pair, 10 dealing with the life of the good, and 11 dealing with that of the evil. The rest of the Ha, speaks of the acceptance of his teachings not only by an Iranian prince and his people, but also by some Turanians, the tribe of Fryana, a Turanian leader.

The Ha opens with two verses expressing anguish at his troubles in spreading the teachings. As we know, the Prophet was a religious innovator. In his times the religion prevailing among the Iranian tribes was essentially a form of ritualistic magic performed through the presumed aid of a multitude of divinities. These beliefs and practices he replaced by what is called the religion of the good life, a life led in accordance with Truth, capable of being grasped by the Good-Mind: two aspects of the one Divinity, Ahura Mazda. It causes no surprise that this major intellectual and institutional revolution he preached energetically and with high poetic articulation, generated a doctrinal and personal rejection from the people and the establishment entrenched in mindless ritualistic traditionalism: a very common religious situation at all times and places. The Prophet is heard, but is forced out of his homeland. He leaves, abandoned and perplexed, but with his faith intact. Here are verses one and two, note the poignancy of feeling, but also the firmness of faith.

(Ha 46.1)

To what land shall I turn, and wither turning shall I go?
For my kinsman and my peers have deserted me.
Not the people, nor their wicked rulers favor me.
How shall I satisfy Thee, O Mazda Ahura?

(Ha 46.2)

I know, Mazda, why I am a man foiled in his wish.
 I have but only a few with me, and scantier still are my
 means for their support.
 Behold, My Lord, I address my appeal to Thee,
 Grant me, Thy gracious help, as a friend might give to a
 friend.
 Grant me, through Truth, the acquisition of the riches of
 the Good-Mind.

During these wanderings following his banishment, the prophet reflects on the human condition, and addresses to Ahura Mazda his anticipation for the establishment of the faith, the full implications of which he articulates later. This is in verse 3.

(Ha 46.3)

When, O Mazda, shall the day dawn for establishing the
 cause of Truth?
 When shall the wise spiritual guides spread effectively the
 sublime teaching?
 To whose help will come the wisdom of the Good-Mind?
 For me, indeed, who has chosen Thee as my instructor, O
 Lord.

At this time the Prophet reflects upon those evil ones who have repudiated him, and having rejected his teachings cling to the rule of deceit and oppression. Zarathushtra hopes for their removal, thus he says:

(Ha 46.4)

The evil-doer holds back the prosperity of the followers of
 Truth,
 Infamous is he, dangerous in his deeds!
 Whoso drives him from the kingdom, removes him from
 peoples' lives,
 Shall go forth preparing the way for the ideal life.

His continuing reflections now turn on the conduct of the good and of the evil, which find expression in verse 6.

(Ha 46.5)

But he who will not help transform Evil
Shall be with those in the abode of the Lie,
For he who looks upon evil with tolerance is no other than
evil.
And indeed, righteous is he who supports the righteous.
These are Thy principles since the dawn of creation, O
Ahura.

The next verse, 7, 'is well known to all Zoroastrians. It is the first verse of the Kusti prayer. It opens with the words "Kemnà Mazda". The prophet, in his times of difficulty and rejections, asks where he might find protection, but his faith and insight enable him to answer the question himself.

(Ha 46.7)

When evil marks me as the object of its assault,
Who shall be the protector of one like me,
Who, but Thy Sacred Fire and Thy Thought,
Verily through their powerful force shall Truth and
Righteousness come into their own.
O Ahura, bring this to full realization.

If you reflect on the full meaning of this prayer, you come to see that like the Prophet himself we all become objects of assault, sometime in our lives. And we already have the means of protection – His Sacred Fire and His Thought. The Sacred Fire is a spiritual concept, it is the spiritual energy which sustains the good creation; its physical manifestation is the ritual fire, in the temple or in the home, before which one may focus one's thinking to grasp the Divine Thought, that is the religion of Ahura Mazda. Living in this way we progressively bring about the rule of Truth and Righteousness.

In the next two verses the Prophet expresses his expectation of what shall be for the evil person, and his anticipation for those who will follow his teachings.

(Ha 46.8)

Should one be intent upon bringing harm to that which is
ours,
May not the flames of this devastation reach us!

But back upon him, let the harm recoil.
 The evil of his actions shall keep him far from the Good
 Life,
 But not from ill, O Mazda!

(Ha 46.9)

Where is the faithful one who heeds me as the first to
 teach,
 That verily Thou art the Highest to invoke.
 In very deed, the Bountiful Providence, The Holy Lord!
 Who will hear, through the Good-Mind What Truth
 made known to me,
 The Truth revealed by the Creator Supreme!

Not only is this a hope for believers, it is also the expression of the Prophet's vision of Ahura Mazda who is the highest to invoke and approachable through His Truth which can be grasped by the Good Mind.

The same theme, of those who are the good and evil, is continued in the next two verses, with the addition that now Zarathushtra tells us of the final end of such persons.

(Ha 46.10)

Whoever, man or woman, does what Thou, O Mazda
 Ahura, knowest to be the best in Life.
 Whoever does right for the sake of Right;
 Whoever in authority governs with the aid of Good-Mind,
 I shall bring all these to join in songs of Thy Praise,
 Forth, shall I with them cross the Bridge of Judgment.

The Bridge of Judgment is the standard metaphor in Zoroastrianism for the passing, upon death, from this existence to the next. The good pass over it into the Abode of Songs, a state of best consciousness, these being the two terms Zarathushtra employs for what we commonly call Heaven. The evil, however, fall by the side and reside in the foul darkness of the House of the Lie; this is the theology; both these states, though of long duration, are not eternal. For at the end of time all creation shall be renovated and everything in existence brought to a state of perfection.

But let us return to the other verse, where Zarathushtra talks of the evil and even identifies some of the groups which comprise them.

(Ha 46.11)

The Karpans and the Kavis have tyrannized over
humanity.
Their evil actions are destructive of Life.
Verily, the conscience of such a one shall torment his soul.
And when they shall come to the Bridge of Judgment,
Their abode, for long ages, shall be in the House of the
Lie.

From this point on the theme of the Ha becomes more sanguine. The Prophet acquires disciples and warmly anticipates more, which gives him hope of social regeneration around him. As he expects the descendants of a leader of the Turanian tribe, Fryana, to accept his teachings, he expresses his enthusiasm in a verse having a happy poetic mood.

(46.12)

When among the kinsmen and descendants of the
renowned Turanian, Fryana, Right arises,
When through the spiritual zeal of Armaity, they further
the welfare of the land,
Then shall Ahura Mazda bring them the illumination of
the Good Mind,
And show them the path of Regeneration.

The prophet now speaks of the kind of follower he is seeking, and indeed, expects to find. This is in verse 13. The next verse declares that he has a royal follower, King Vishtaspa. And then with rising confidence in the next verse, he addresses the Spitama, his own clan, who now seem to be ready to heed their own Prophet. Here are those three verses.

(Ha 46.13)

He who shall please Spitama Zarathushtra, by his noble
actions,
He indeed is worthy himself to proclaim the doctrines of
Thy Faith, O Lord.
Him shall Ahura Mazda bless with Good Life,
He shall flourish through the Good-Mind.
Verily, he is a faithful friend of Thine, O Truth!

(Ha 46.14)

“O Zarathushtra, what man is thy faithful friend for the
 Great Cause,
 Who wishes to have Thy mission announced?
 Verily, he is Vishtaspa!
 Those whom Thou gather in Thy abode, O Mazda Ahura,
 Those shall I address with words of the Good Mind.

(Ha 46.15)

O ye Spitama, descendants of Haechataspa, I declare to
 you:
 With wisdom distinguish well between right and wrong;
 Let your deeds advance the Right,
 In conformity with the primeval laws of the Lord.

Zarathushtra instructs with praise Frashaoshtra and Jamaspa, two nobles of King Vishtaspa's court. In the same vein the last two verses of the Ha manifest a spirit of satisfaction; where confidence in the acceptance of the teachings is reinforced with the likely outcome for the followers of the faith and those who reject it

(Ha 46.18)

He who is with me in our highest aspirations,
 On him shall I bestow, through the Good Mind, the best
 in my power;
 But torment shall be upon him who to us is a tormenting
 oppressor.
 O Lord Mazda, and O Spirit of Truth, striving thus to
 accomplish your wish,
 Is the decision of my understanding. And thus do I will.

(Ha 46.19)

He, who following Truth, shall work for me, Zarathushtra,
 To bring us toward the Great Renovation in accordance
 with Thy purpose,
 For him shall be all honor and content in this world,
 And a fitting state in the life beyond.
 As verily, Thou hast revealed to me, O All-knowing

Mazda.

The prophet expects his followers, acting in accordance with Truth, to bring the world toward the great renovation. They shall have a worthy existence in this life, and a fitting state hereafter.

Thus, hope and a sense of fulfillment end Zarathushtra's reflection on his mission. For, what he confidently expects reformed humanity to achieve is the total renovation of existence in accordance with the purpose of Ahura Mazda.

VIII. ANTICIPATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GOOD. Yasna 48

In this relatively short Ha Zarathushtra speaks to his audience and to Ahura Mazda. The tone of this poem suggests a period of political uncertainty, as these times were of conflict among tribes, with military and political upheavals. For the people who hear, he crystallizes his religious vision, indeed they had been exposed to it earlier. And to Ahura Mazda he asks questions. These questions are not inquiries about the doctrine, they are rather the asking of assurance that Mazda's believers and supporters will be vindicated in these times of social uncertainty. The religious doctrine is utterly stable, so is the confidence in the final establishment of Ahura Mazda's domain. The Ha expresses the anticipation of the faithful that their vindication may come soon; and in the meantime they remain dedicated to the basic principles of the faith.

The first verse imagines a time at the end of history, at the beginning of the period of salvation. The prophet has full confidence in that final vindication. But in the very next verse he asks Ahura Mazda if the righteous will overcome the evil before the final crisis, as that would be most beneficial for the world's regeneration.

(Ha 48.1)

When at the time of awarding, men, with the help of
Truth, shall vanquish the lie;
When deception and untruth – for long decried – of false
gods and men, stand exposed,
Then, at the time of salvation, there shall be full adoration
of Thy Glory.

(Ha 48.2)

Tell me, O Ahura, for Thou art the all-knowing Shall the
righteous overcome the evil foe,
Even before the great crisis overtakes us?
For that were indeed a blessed event for the world's
regeneration.

(Ha 48.3)

O Benevolent, Omniscient Mazda!
To the man understanding Thy message

Thou dost bestow the profound treasure of Thy teaching,
That which Thou hast established through Truth
With an intelligence inspired by the Good Mind!

The Prophet now reflects over the differences between those that are good and those that are evil. He articulates a fundamental truth about human moral behavior, that our words and deeds reflect our thoughts, our actions are to be seen as the consequences of our character, for which we bear responsibility and face appropriate ends.

(Ha 48.4)

Those whose minds move to uplifting thoughts
And those others whose minds turn to what is base;
Their words and deeds will reflect their thoughts,
For their choices will follow their sentiments,
Their ends will be different as Thy Wisdom declares.

The social turbulence and political peril of the times can be discerned in the next two verses, where Zarathushtra expresses a yearning for wise and peaceful rule which he associates with the blessing of Armaity – the spirit of Piety, Devotion and Benevolence.

(Ha 48.5)

Let those who know how to rule well, and not the evil
rulers, rule us.
Let them rule us with wisdom, rule us with skill, O spirit
of Piety!
O Thou, bring humanity to perfection, and give hallowed
blessing for its future life,
Let man be active, zealously caring for his land and
creatures so that they may flourish.

(Ha 48.6)

For Armaity's spirit of Devotion, with the power of
determined thought,
Bless us with peace, prosperity and vigor of spirit.
For her did Ahura Mazda make the plants grow through
Truth's law of nature,
At the time of origination of Life.

After these requests for blessings, the Prophet turns to his

audience instructing them to a life worthy of acceptance by Ahura.

(Ha 48.7)

O ye, who would be bound by the Good Mind, and strive
to spread the Truth,

O ye, who desire to sustain the Holy Cause,

Suppress all anger and violence,

Abandon all ill-will and strife!

Such benevolent ones shall be in Thy Abode, O Ahura.

In the latter part of this Ha we encounter the question manifesting the distress Zarathushtra feels at the unfortunate state of the world and human society. He is particularly distressed by the violence of petty tyrants supported in their oppression and violence by the priesthood who engage in rituals of sacrifice and intoxication, a common practice among the ancient Indo-European peoples. Zarathushtra rejects and repudiates these religious practices as perverse, and the political practices of these rulers as evil. In both these areas he was a reformer, and was thus attacked by the clergy and the princes. But his denunciation is clear and uncompromising, it is quite free of personal hatred; what is repudiated are their practices and behavior. The Prophet believes that even among these misguided evil-doers Good-Thought and the Wisdom of Mazda may be spread.

(Ha 48.9)

When shall I know, O Mazda, how dost Thou rule with
truth and justice,

Over those who oppress and cast me in fear and doubt?

Let the scheme of Good Thought be made known to me,
Should not the savior-to-be know what the blessed
outcome shall be?

(Ha 48.10)

When shall good persons come to understand and spread
Thy, Wisdom, O Mazda?

Then shall they remove the filthy evil of intoxication?

The evil by which the wicked sacrificers and the evil lords
of the lands Make desolate the world!

(Ha 48.11)

When, O Mazda, shall Piety come with Truth in our lands,

When shall happy life in peaceful pastures come to us
through good rule?

Who shall bring peace to us from cruel and wicked men?

To whom shall the wisdom of the Good Mind come?

The last verse contains the question which articulates Zarathushtra's views of the good social and political order. Zarathushtra offers an answer to the last question of this verse, and doing so introduces the idea of the savior. Such a one is a benefactor of humanity who turns the world to Truth and Justice without violence. Let this be noticed by those reformers who propose to reform by violent revolution!

The conception and characteristics of the savior appear in the verse with which the Ha ends. Not only is it an indication of the thought of Zarathushtra that what the troubled times needed were saviors, it is also the expression of a deeper insight of the Prophet that social strain and political violence and oppression are to be corrected not by force but by moral regeneration.

(Ha 48.12)

Such are the saviors of the earth

Who, inspired by the Good-Mind, cause betterment.

By actions in tune with the laws of Truth and Justice

They are indeed appointed by Thee to dispel violence, O
Mazda!

Such is the hope of Zarathushtra; and also a hope that lives in the hearts of Zoroastrians to this very day.

IX. THE WEDDING SONG AND SERMON OF ZARATHUSHTRA. HA 53

The social customs of the Iranian tribes to whom Zarathushtra preached are known to us in a very hazy and incomplete form. These peoples had only recently changed from a nomadic to a settled social existence. Whatever may have been the ancient form of the institution of marriage at that time, Zarathushtra transformed it and made it an act of thoughtful and free choice of each partner, with full realization of the responsibilities to come. This strikingly modern view is entirely in keeping with the prophet's conception of individual responsibility in moral life; and morality as the heart of religious living.

In the Gathas we find a few references to episodes in the life of the prophet. A happy and domestic one among these is the one leading to the wedding of his daughter, Pouruchista. The groom was Jamaspa of the Hvogva family. He was a follower of the religion propounded by the prophet. He was also the minister of King Vishtaspa, the king who accepting Zarathushtra's mission made it the religion of his court.

Perhaps in anticipation of the event, or perhaps as he was the first and foremost of his followers, Zarathushtra appraises the worth and character of Jamaspa, and records the fact of his having chosen the faith of the Lord. With striking simplicity Zarathushtra tells us the result of Jamaspa's allegiance to the new creed. No worldly position, no mortal sovereignty, no material gain, no promise of luxurious heaven is held out to him.

Zarathushtra's ethics stand on another level. He says, in words as simple as they are sublime, that in choosing the wisdom of the faith of the Lord, Jamaspa attained to this noble heritage, viz., "the kingdom of the Good Mind". The depth of meaning of these six words I leave to the reader to contemplate. I quote the full verse of a previous Ha as I interpret it:

(Ha 51.18)

Jamaspa Hvogva, of wealth and power, and follower of
Truth,
Doth choose for himself the wisdom of Thy Faith, O Lord,
And so choosing doth he attain to this great heritage,
The Kingdom of Good Mind.
Grant me, O Lord, that I may so teach people,

As ever to look for their shelter and protection in Thee, O
Ahura.

Then to his daughter, Pouruchista, Zarathushtra speaks in a fashion which sounds remarkably modern. Here we come upon a fundamental characteristic of Zarathushtra's wisdom, his faith in the judgment of his hearers. After presenting before the mind of his audience his vision and principles, he would leave them to form their judgment, entrusting their complete freedom of choice. He gave this freedom of choice in so many words to the people who had come "from near and from far" to hear him, in his sermon in Yasna 30, verse 2. With greater ease, therefore, could he give his own daughter such a freedom of choice in the selection of husband. He therefore in describing the good qualities of Jamaspa, says that he believes he is the appropriate to be her husband; yet in the last sentence he – the Prophet and the Father – asks her to deliberate on this matter herself, and act only as her own wisdom may dictate. This beautiful verse reads as follows:

(Ha 53.3)

To Pouruchista, scion of the clans of Haechataspa and
Spitama,
Youngest of the daughters of Zarathushtra;
Grant the constant aid of the Good-Mind,
The strong support of thy Truth,
That she may take counsel with enlightened
understanding.

Then Pouruchista replies. Perhaps the love for the great and wise follower of her illustrious father had already entered her heart. Her answer opens with a declaration which would do credit to any girl at any time. But the spiritual insight of the rest is even more striking. A love is not worthy of mention if all its rich power for good is allowed to be wasted by its being centered on its first object as its only aim and end. Life is not worth living without service, and no love, is complete, none worthy of its name, if it does not gradually expand into a loving service, not only of kith and kin, but of all humanity. Pouruchista in her answer teaches this lesson. What is the ultimate blessing she wants ? She seeks the light of the Good Mind. Here is her answer :

(Ha 53.4)

Pouruchista:
"Verily, have I chosen him,

Faithful to my father and to my husband,
 Faithful to the peasants as to the nobles,
 Faithful as a righteous woman should be to the righteous,
 Mine shall be the glorious heritage –
 The light of the Good Mind;
 May Ahura Mazda grant me this blessing that endureth
 for all time.”

The selection is made. The consent is given and the wedding day arrives. With the ceremony befitting the occasion the bridal pair is united in the sacred bond of marriage according to the national customs and the rites of the Iranians. Perhaps in the course of the solemn ceremony, or perhaps after, possibly in front of a sacred altar of fire, stands the stately figure of the bride’s father addressing the pair. In his white-robed simplicity, the Head of Athravans, the Prophet of the land, gives an oration, two verses of which have come down to us. These thoughts are timeless in their application, noble in their sentiment, worthy of being incorporated in the marriage service. Read and judge for yourself.

(Ha 53.5)

These words do I address to you, maidens marrying,
 These counsels do I give to you bridegrooms,
 Heed them in your mind and lay them to heart
 Learn from the righteous the precepts of the Good
 Religion;
 Let both then strive to lead the Life of the Good Mind;
 With upright hearts let each cherish the other;
 Then surely a happy life shall be yours.

(Ha 53.6)

And these are facts, O ye men and women:
 No happiness can be yours if the spirit of Falsehood
 directs your lives;
 Cast off from yourself all evil bonds that may chain you to
 untruth;
 Happiness linked with dishonor, happiness that harms
 others, is poison for the seeker.
 The evil faithless who brings ruin to the righteous here,

destroys for himself his spiritual life hereafter.

Remember, this event took place, these sublime words were uttered – fragments of some wonderful whole – over 3,000 years ago, at the dawn of civilization.

X. DEATH AND AFTER-LIFE IN THE GATHAS. CITATIONS FROM VARIOUS HA'S

Death does not appear as a dominant theme in Zarathushtra's theology, it is not a major concern, but life after death is an integral part of the doctrine. The Gathic doctrine is simple compared to the elaboration it received in the later Zoroastrian tradition.

Death is the termination of the physical life of the body, the soul does not thereby perish. The soul is viewed as proceeding to cross the bridge of the separator; if its life is good then it crosses to the Abode of Songs, if it fails because it has been evil, it falls into the region of the House of the Lie, foul and dark. These are the dramatic metaphors for judgment and recompense, and for Heaven and Hell. But the Gathas talk of a final Renovation, when all evil shall be purged from existence, at which time the souls of the evil too will be purged and all existence will be in a state of perfection. Then again there are passages in the Gathas where Heaven and Hell are viewed as states of spiritual consciousness.

In the presentation of the doctrine regarding the two opposed spirits, Zarathushtra refers to the lot of the righteous and evil thus:

(Ha 30.4)

And when these two spirits came together at first,
They established Life and the Denial of Life;
And so shall it be till the World will last.
The Worst Existence shall be the lot of the followers of
evil,
And the state of B-est Consciousness be the reward of the
Righteous.

The state of enlightenment of the righteous is, of course, related to the individual's understanding and living by the wisdom of the religious message. It is thus rooted in the Good-Mind which brings one to perfection in this life and its continuity in a transformed existence hereafter. Reflect on

(Ha 31.6)

His is indeed the Best State who declares truly the
message of Thy Holy Wisdom,
The message of the perfection of being and eternal life,

Of Mazda's Kingdom which ever flourishes through the
Good-Mind.

Zarathushtra's teachings have this purpose, to cause in the individual believer the understanding that awakens him to the exalted wisdom, and brings him to the final blissful state, which we popularly call salvation. Thus:

(Ha 28.4)

I shall take the awakened soul to the exalted abode with
the help of Good-Mind;

Knowing the blissful rewards of the Wise Lord for
righteous deeds;

As long as I have power and strength I shall teach all to
seek for Truth and Right.

As we have seen earlier, Zarathushtra recognizes clearly that we live in a corrupt world, made corrupt by the offensive work of the Kavis; the term refers to the tribal chiefs, but it can mean any one who wields power. The Kavis of today are not only political or governmental leaders, but also those who by their position of power, wealth, or office force upon others conditions contrary to Truth. These evil powerful men were supported by the Karpans, which term refers to mumbling priests who through magical chants supported the predatory raids of the chiefs. The Karpans of today are chanters of misinformation and falsehood, the public relations and information officers, the propagandists, religious or secular, who not only mislead the public, providing the evil-doing Kavis with justification, but also quiet the gnawing consciences of their masters.

Their evil is to be resisted and vanquished by the teachings of Ahura Mazda. The life of the religious faithful will succeed here and hereafter; so that no matter what misery the evil inflict on us, they will ultimately fail, and the good will be saved.

(Ha 32.15)

Thy message shall undo the works of the evil-doers.

No more shall the wicked Kavis and Karpans rule over the
lives of the righteous.

The good shall be escorted through Perfection and
Immortality

To the Realms of the Best Mental Existence!

It should be obvious from the nature of the theology of the Gathas

that the state of the soul after death is in accordance with justice. The Gathas do not present a picture of judgment as if at a trial, where pleas of mercy could be offered. What one receives is a just recompense, a consequence of one's life.

(Ha 43.5)

Verily I believe Thee, O Mazda Ahura, to be the supreme
Benevolent Providence.

For I beheld Thee as the primeval source of creation.

For by Thy perfect wisdom Thou shalt render just
recompense for all actions,

Good to the good, evil to evil,

At the last turning of creation.

(Ha 51.13)

The wrong of the wicked shall perish before the right of
the truthful.

Standing at the Bridge of Judgment,

The evil soul beholds the path of righteousness,

But the evil of his actions, the words of his evil tongue,
prove to be his downfall,

In remorse, he finds that he fails.

Notice here that the justice of Ahura Mazda is laid down at the time of creation and is an eternal and abiding principle of the existence He created. But the one who has lived the good life in this imperfect world, and is thus a follower of the path given to us by Ahura Mazda passes, upon death, to His Abode to dwell with Truth and Good-Mind.

(Ha 44.9)

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura!

How shall I bring to perfection the insight into Faith,
Which Thou, Lord of Supreme Wisdom, hast
instructed me with Thy Authority?

May it be, that we, Thy followers, dwell with Truth and
Good-Mind in Thy Abode!

The consequences are expressed more dramatically in the last Gathic Ha.

(Ha 53.7)

O ye, men and women.
When faithful zeal inspires your life,
When tainted thoughts and intentions are rooted out,
When the evil within you is destroyed for ever,
Then shall the blessed Reward be yours for the Good
Work.
And if you fail, "Alas, Alas" shall be your final words.

Clearly, there is a contrast between the lots of the spirits of the good and the evil, each is in the state he or she chose in life. The state of consciousness of the departed is a continuation of its choices in life. This is a refined spiritual notion. The idea prevalent in popular religious literature that soon after death the soul comes to a supernatural court for judgment and attains the supreme joy of heavenly salvation, or be condemned to the unspeakable torments of hell, with the possible third alternative of reparation in an intermediate domain, is absent in the Gathas.

Death is not viewed as a catastrophic event with deep foreboding, something to be dreaded by ordinarily sinful human beings, who must plead for mercy or utilize the aid of religious recitation to free them from bonds of this or that kind. Death cannot be cheated, it comes to one and all, nor can the spiritual state be transformed by religious machinations. Each one of us is his or her own savior. The spiritual state in after-life is viewed as a degree of the fullness of realization in consciousness of Truth and the Good-Mind in the House of Ahura-Mazda, poetically presented as the Abode of Songs.

This topic is presented with an abundance of metaphorical and idiomatic expressions, as indeed, one would expect, even in the otherwise rich metaphorical and idiomatic text of the Gathas.

Our immortality, we may surmise, is of two kinds. After death we live in the recollections of those who remember what we were and what we did to make the world better. The transformation we leave behind us in human welfare and enlightenment is also a testament to our immortality, even though no one may recall it. The other form of immortality is the enlightened consciousness of the soul. That mode of existence is not conceivable to us, incarnate souls, in this life, nor is it describable in our language. Some mystics may have discerned it, but they can speak to us only in poetry or parables.

We can conclude our very inadequate survey of this topic of deep religious concern to humans by reading two verses. One, an easily

understandable prayer for the Worthy faithful, the other, a richly poetic expression of the Prophet's personal approach to the Divinity.

(Ha 51.3)

All these, indeed, gather unto Thee, O Mazda,
They who have done Thy work,
Whose actions accord with Truth
Whose words proceed from the Good-Mind,
Whose inspirer art Thou from the very beginning!

(Ha 50.4)

With Truth moving my heart,
With Best Thought inspiring my mind,
With all the might of spiritual force within me,
I venerate Thee, O Mazda, with songs of Thy praise! And
at the last when I shall stand at thy gate
I shall hear the echo of my prayers from Thy Abode of
Songs.