

Meditation and Contemplation.

We have seen that Zarathushtra's way of life is essentially an action-based, practical way of living ~ searching for truth, understanding it, embodying it in thought, word and action, and ruling ourselves and our social units in accordance with it.

But what of meditation and contemplation? Do they have a place in his thought? They do. They are a part of 'good thinking'. As we consider the matter let us recall that Zarathushtra uses 'mind', 'thinking', and 'thought' to include not just intellectual functions, but the full spectrum of conscious, abstract capabilities ~ including the spiritual. In his thought, there is no divide between the 'mental' and the 'spiritual' ~ both are a part of good thinking (*vohu- manah-*).¹

At its apex, good thinking is Wisdom personified (*mazdā-*) ~ the complete comprehension of the true (wholly good) order of existence (*aša- vahišta-*), an enlightened existence. This apex is also called [the House of Good Thinking](#) (one of Zarathushtra's names for the state of being that is paradise)² ~ a state of being that occurs when one understands wholly, completely, the true order of existence, (*aša-*), personifying it.³

The intermediate steps to that apex also involve good thinking, although the quality of such thinking may be less than complete, less than perfect. Good thinking is how we search for, and understand truth (*aša-*) ~ incrementally at first, and ultimately completely. So these intermediate steps of good thinking are the search for truth ~ for the true order in the existences of matter and mind. Zarathushtra sometimes calls these intermediate steps "[the path\(s\) of truth](#)", and also "[the paths of good thinking](#)" (Y34.12, Y51.16 Insler 1975).⁴

Later Avestan texts speak of wisdom that is innate/heavenly, and wisdom that is acquired by the ear ~ both as something to be glad about, and praised, but with no explanations or details. The Avestan word which Mills translates as 'innate', Darmesteter translates as 'heavenly', but he acknowledges that it is innate. For example:

Yy25.6 a YAv. text in Mills' (somewhat free) translation speaks of

"... innate understanding [*āsnəm x ratūm*] Mazda-made, and the derived understanding, heard with ear [*gaošō.srūtəm x ratūm*], and Mazda-made". There is no word 'derived' in the Avestan text.⁵

Sirozah II, § 2, a YAv. text, translated by Darmesteter speaks of,

"... the heavenly Wisdom [*āsnəm x ratūm*], made by Mazda; ... the Wisdom acquired through the ear [*gaošō.srūtəm x ratūm*], made by Mazda". The same idea is expressed in § 29.⁶

The word *āsnəm* in the quotations above, is translated by Mills as 'innate', and by Darmesteter as 'heavenly', but Darmesteter footnotes the words "heavenly Wisdom" in an earlier section, in *Sirozah* I § 2, and explains that this is the inborn intellect, intuition, contrasted with *gaoshō-sruta* *khra*tū, the knowledge acquired by hearing and learning, commenting on a near parallel in Indic texts.⁷ So Darmesteter and Mills are in accord in seeing *āsnəm x ratūm* as describing an understanding or wisdom that is innate, within a person. If Darmesteter is correct that *āsnəm* also means 'heavenly',⁸ it would indicate the heavenly wisdom within (or the Divine within).⁹

But what is so interesting, and relevant to the subject of meditation, is that in the YAv. *Sirozah* I and II, this phrase which speaks of the innate/heavenly wisdom, and wisdom acquired by the ear, appears in the sections which praise and describe good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), and the Beneficial Word (*mąθra- spąnta-*).¹⁰ Thus we see corroboration in the later texts of the conclusion that in the Gathas, 'good thinking' (*vohu- manah-*) includes (among other things) not only contemplating on wisdom acquired by the ear, but also accessing innate/heavenly wisdom ~ which is what meditation is about.

Such descriptions in the later texts of innate/heavenly wisdom, and wisdom acquired by the ear have their genesis in the Gathas. I see both ideas in Y30.2,¹¹ (and in other verses as well).

"Listen with your ears to the best things [*vahištā*]. Reflect with a clear mind ~ man by man for himself ~ ..." Y30.2, Insler 1975.¹²

The 1st half of this phrase is the genesis of the YAv. 'wisdom acquired by the ear'. I find it interesting that Zarathushtra does not say in this verse 'Listen with your ears to my teachings.' He says 'Listen with your ears to (what are the) most good (things) [*vahištā*],' my more literal translation.

Where do we hear '(what are the) most-good things'? What are the 'most-good (things)'? How do we know what is 'most good'?

In ancient times, before the discovery of writing, the way most people acquired information, knowledge, ideas, was through songs, poems, stories, conversation or oral instruction (hence acquired by the ear). Even after writing was invented, literacy was limited to a few and most people did not have access to the written word. Today, what is 'acquired by the ear' (i.e. from others) would include what we read.

The sources of this 'wisdom acquired by the ear' are all around us. It may be something that we hear in a song on the radio as we are driving, or an idea from a friend (or 'enemy!'), or a comment we read in a novel, or on the internet. And we also may obtain these insights and understandings from the teachings of wise souls (such as the Gathas, and the spiritual and philosophical treasures of other teachers, both religious and secular). Essentially, it comprises the ideas and insights ~ the wisdom ~ we hear from others. This way of acquiring understanding from other souls is another instance of the give and take of mutual, loving help that we see throughout Zarathushtra's thought. But it is up to us ("...man by man for himself..." Y30.2, Insler 1975) to decide what is 'most-good' from the many things we hear from others.

Which brings us to the question. What did Zarathushtra consider to be 'most-good', when he tells us to 'Listen with your ears to (what are the) most-good (things).' Y30.2 (my more literal translation).

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra uses 'most-good' *vahišta-* for Wisdom Himself, for the true order of existence, (which is the existence of the Divine), for the other divine qualities which are aspects of truth (its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule), for Wisdom's teachings (which is the path of truth, its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule), for the words and actions which implement these teachings, and for the reward for such teachings (which is the attainment of truth, *aša-*, and its components, the amesha spenta).¹³ So with this one word 'most-good' *vahišta-*, he in effect tells us to listen with our ears, to the divine ~ wherever we find it (which is just another aspect of the search for truth ~ a fundament of Zarathushtra's teachings). As he says in another verse,

"And let a person listen ... with good thinking [*vohu- manah-*], Wise One. Let him listen with truth [*aša-*] ..." Y49.7, Insler 1975, (truth and good thinking are qualities of the Divine).

Let us now consider the 2d half of the sentence in Y30.2. "Reflect with a clear mind ~ man by man for himself ~ ..." Y30.2 Insler 1975. The Avestan word which Insler translates as 'clear' is *sūcā*, which means 'light-filled' or 'illuminated'.¹⁴ So 'Reflect with (an) illumined (light-filled) mind ...', (my more literal translation).

What does it mean to 'reflect' with a mind that is 'illuminated, light-filled'? In the Gathas, light (in its various manifestations including fire) is used as a metaphor for the true order of existence (*aša-*), its comprehension (good thinking *vohu- manah-*), and the Divine itself ~ Wisdom (*mazdā-*) ~ whose existence personifies these qualities. And Zarathushtra also teaches that each of us has (within us) these divine qualities.¹⁵

Indeed, he implies that the Divine is immanent (in being) within all things, an idea that is more strongly implied in some later Avestan and Pahlavi texts which speak of the fire in all things ~ in man, in animals, in plants, in the world ~ and also speak of the Glory (*x'arənah-*) in all things.¹⁶ This is the 'innate/heavenly wisdom' of the later texts which we access by reflecting with a mind that is '...illuminated (light-filled)...' Y30.2, ~ a truth-filled mind ~ a process that includes meditation and contemplation.

Meditation techniques.

The word 'meditation', itself appears only once in the Gathas, in Y43.15. Unfortunately, not only do translations vary,¹⁷ but the forms of the word in surviving manuscripts vary as well.¹⁸ Both Insler 1975 and Taraporewala 1951 see in *tušnā.maitiš* the idea of 'meditation'; Bartholomae thinks it is a 'silent, submissive mind' (among other things). Insler's translation starts as follows,

"Yes, I have already realized Thee to be [*spənta-* beneficial], Wise Lord, when he attended me with good thinking and revealed ~ he the meditative one [*tušnā.maitiš*] ~ the best things [*vahišta-*] to be said..." Y43.15 Insler 1975. Insler believes that the enigmatical 'he' in this verse is the beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*, (the grammatical gender of *mainyu-* is masc., hence the masc. pronoun 'he').¹⁹ And I think a careful analysis of Yasna 43 bears this out for many reasons (discussed in another chapter).²⁰

The over-all idea of Y43.15 seems to be that a beneficial way of being (the enigmatic 'he'), generates good thinking ("when he attended me with good thinking" Insler 1975), which in silent meditation, brings the understanding that the nature of the Divine is beneficial (*spənta-*), as well as an understanding of goodness in the superlative degree (*vahišta-*) which is a word that Zarathushtra uses for the Divine, Its attributes (amesha spenta), the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path ~ paradise.²¹

It is worth noting that the opening phrase of Y43.15 "Yes, I have already realized Thee to be [*spənta-*], Wise Lord, when he attended me with good thinking..." (Insler 1975) is repeated at the start of six verses in this song, Y43, indicating that Zarathushtra really wanted us to get the idea that it is a beneficial (*spənta-*) way of being that generates the good thinking which enables us to understand that the nature of the Divine is wholly beneficial (*spənta-*) ~ an elegant and beautiful circle (if you think about it ~ or meditate on it).

Zarathushtra also asks the Divine to instruct him, through good thinking.

"... Instruct us to those paths of good thinking, easy to travel in alliance with truth," Y34.12, Insler 1975

'... May the Giver of reason/understanding instruct through good thinking (the course of) my direction (so as) to be (the) charioteer of (my) tongue.' Y50.6, my translation.²²

Additional examples are footnoted.²³

How does the 'Giver of reason/understanding instruct through good thinking'? By giving us insights and understandings ~ in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, and also in silent meditation, (*tušnā.maitiš* Y43.15). So I am inclined to think that silent meditation was originally a part of Zarathushtra's teachings. But with the passage of centuries, and destructive wars (Alexander the Macedonian in 331 BCE, and later the Arabs around 647 CE in which so much knowledge was lost when texts were burned, and the learned killed) whatever meditation techniques may have been used by Zarathushtra and his early followers, have long since been lost. But I would like to mention one thing. I find it interesting that the Sufis meditate while looking at a flame. Many Sufi beliefs are very close to Zarathushtra (although there are also material differences).²⁴ Is this a meditation technique that originated with Zarathushtra? We do not know. I prefer to meditate without symbols of any kind ~ just by fixing my mind of the Divine, and allowing whatever comes, to come.

Whatever meditation techniques Zarathushtra may have used, in one respect it would have been very different from certain meditation techniques today. He does not reject any aspect of *manah*- 'mind' other than thoughts that injure, harm, are destructive, etc. His teaching does not condemn or look down on, as 'chatter', the doubts or worries that sometimes interfere with clearing our minds in meditation. The 'wisdom within', the 'innate, heavenly wisdom', is what helps us to deal with, and work through our doubts, worries, insecurities, etc. These are a part of what needs to be healed ~ not condemned and rejected as something unworthy. Indeed, when we meditate, we should allow our innate wisdom to help us find solutions to our wrong-headed thoughts. I can only say, that works for me. You would need to find meditation techniques that work for you. But I offer this advice: be gentle with yourself. Our infirmities of understanding are part of our mixed, imperfect state of being ~ one that is slowly but surely evolving towards an increasingly better understanding, more insight, more spirituality ~ all of which comprise one's full spectrum of consciousness that is increasingly more good ~ *vohu- manah*-.

Meditation on Manthras.

In addition to acquiring 'wisdom by the ear' from others through what we hear and read (which in itself is not meditation), I think there is a type of meditation which involves 'wisdom acquired by the ear'.

The three most important prayers in Zoroastrianism are not 'prayers' at all, in that they are not addressed to the Divine, nor are they in praise of the Divine. They are manthras, nuggets of wisdom, which enlarge the understanding of a mind that meditates over their meanings.²⁵ And the Gathas themselves are also called *mąθra- spąnta-* in the later texts ~ 'the beneficial Word' ~ 'precepts that provoke thought' (*mąθra-* / *mąθrā-*) that are 'beneficial-sacred (*spąnta-*).²⁶ Many Gatha verses, when meditated upon, do indeed yield multi-dimensional ideas ~ ideas that are beneficial (*spąnta-*), and most-good (*vahišta-*), and (to me) most-beautiful (*sraēšta-*), that provide us with a framework for living.

Did Zarathushtra's meditation also include meditation through music? The Gathas are songs. To meditate on a verse of the Gathas would have been to meditate on it as sung. Would the structure of the music have aided an understanding of the ideas in a verse? Would the non-verbal nature of the music have aided meditation? I am inclined to think it would have ~ witness the Indic *bhajans* ~ devotional songs. I will never forget an occasion when I was in India, waiting for eye surgery in a hospital waiting room; the piped in music was a selection of *bhajans*; I did not understand one word of the lyrics, but the music alone was so beautiful it induced a state of meditation. We no longer know the music to which the Gathas were sung, so we no longer have answers to these questions.

In any event, meditating on a manthra composed by Zarathushtra, combines 'wisdom acquired by the ear' and 'innate wisdom' because these manthras are not didactic. They do not lay out information or ideas like a catechism. They are multi-dimensioned puzzles in which ideas flow into and out of each other, revealing their aspects to an inquiring mind. This type of meditation (or contemplation) may be done anywhere, at any time, in any way that allows the mind free play ~ while gardening, while going for a walk, whatever (but not while driving!). It essentially involves allowing your mind to play over a certain verse or manthra (in a language you know the meaning of) and the resulting insights and understandings. This type of meditation reveals the wisdom of the manthran (the person who composed the manthra) which he provides for the listener ~ wisdom acquired by the ear ~ and also involves consulting 'innate wisdom', the Divine within, ~ when we allow our minds to play over the manthra, generating quiet insights, and also Eureka! moments.

In short, I see two forms of meditation in Zarathushtra's thought (there well may be more that I simply have not yet discovered). One way is the silent meditation, mentioned in Y43.15 (accessing the divine wisdom within). The other is a contemplative meditation on a selected manthra (words of reason, words that provoke thought) which Zarathushtra has given us, and/or on the many bits and pieces of wisdom which we hear from a variety of sources in our day to day lives (representing the divine wisdom in all things).

The reclusive life.

Many religious beliefs advocate asceticism, (depriving ourselves of material pleasures), as necessary for spiritual growth. Some go (or perhaps used to go) further, requiring the mortification of the flesh ~ hair shirts, flagellation, long fasts, and other physically painful experiences ~ as a necessary part of attaining spirituality, the idea being that 'spirit' is enhanced only when the 'flesh' is denied or starved, or harmed, or reduced in some way. Many religions advocate, as the ultimate step on the spiritual path, that we withdraw from the world in order to better contemplate and obtain enlightenment, spiritual perfection.

Zarathushtra's teachings are quite different. The ultimate step on the spiritual path (in Zarathushtra's thought), is being beneficial (a generous, bountiful, lovingkindness), and removing from our beings all that is not in accord with the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence, such as ignorance, injustice, hatred, prejudice, lies, tyranny, harming, and the many 'wrongs' identified in the Gathas, and such additional 'wrongs' of which we may become aware in our on-going search for truth.

In the Gathas, the acquisition of wisdom is experience based. Wisdom acquired by the ear and innate wisdom all are affected by, and affect, the matrix of our material experiences. The hermit, the recluse, does not appear in the Gathas. The people of Zarathushtra's society were warriors, herdsmen and artisans.²⁷ We really do not have evidence ~ one way or the other ~ which would

establish whether hermits or recluses existed (or did not exist) in his society.²⁸ But there is no concept in the Gathas of equating a withdrawal from the world with the attainment of spirituality.

On the other hand, neither do we have any evidence that Zarathushtra himself condemned such withdrawals from the world as "wrong". Indeed, in a very late (Pahlavi) text, he is said to have withdrawn to the mountains to try to puzzle out the questions that troubled him about the nature of the Divine, the suffering in existence, the purpose of life, the path to the Divine, and the consequences of taking that path.

The only surviving evidence (that most scholars believe are his own words) is the Gathas, and the *Asha Vahishta* (*Ashem Vohu*), and the *Ahuna Vairya* (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*) mantras. Can we ascertain from this evidence what his views might have been? Well, his underlying framework for spiritual growth is the search for truth in the existences of matter (factual truths) and mind (abstract, spiritual, truths).

In so searching, a soul may well need a temporary period of withdrawal,²⁹ ~ without the distractions of the many day to day priorities that demand our attention ~ to re-charge its batteries, to gain (or regain) perspective, to contemplate on and understand its experiences and existence, even perhaps to access and experience the ecstasy of the Divine within.

If such withdrawal is required at any given time for exercising good thinking (as Zarathushtra uses that term), and if it helps us in our search for truth, our search for the Divine (which personifies truth), can we (truthfully) say that Zarathushtra would condemn it? We do know that one of his terms for paradise is not 'the House of Good Word' nor 'the House of Good Action', but [the House of Good Thinking \(Y32.15\)](#), Insler 1975.

Conclusion:

One of the things I love about Zarathushtra's thought is that he does not reject any aspect of our existence ~ other than untruth and the harm it generates. Each aspect of our existence can be used for 'good'. The material and the spiritual, the paths of action and the paths of meditation ~ each has a part to play in his paradigm of existence, and the fulfillment of its purpose. Meditation and contemplation are not exclusive paths to the Divine in his thought. But they are among the multiple ["paths of good thinking" \(Y34.12, Y51.16, Insler 1975\)](#), ~ the innate/heavenly wisdom, and wisdom acquired by the ear, which incrementally lead to a state of being that is wisdom/Wisdom personified.

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¹ See *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*.

² See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise and Hell*.

³ See *Part One: Completeness and Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*, and see in *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*, and *The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta*; and *The Houses of Paradise and Hell*.

⁴ See *Part Two: A Question of Reward & the Path*.

⁵ Mills translation in SBE 31, p. 277.

The YAv. words of this phrase in Yy25.6 (transliterated from Geldner 1P p. 92), and my translation, are as follows,

āsnəm x ratūm mazdadātəm yazamaide•• gaošō.srūtəm x ratūm mazdadātəm yazamaide
 '... the innate/heavenly understanding, Wisdom-given, we worship/celebrate. The ear-heard understanding, Wisdom-given we worship/celebrate...'. Yy25.6, my translation.

The word *yazamaide* is frequently (and correctly) translated as 'we worship'. However, in some contexts, 'celebrate' comes closer to the Avestan notion of 'worship' (*Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*, and a ft. therein). Mills and Darmesteter translate the word *mazdadātəm* as 'Mazda-made' (or 'made by Mazda'). But the 2d part of that word derives from *dā-* which means 'to give, to make, to establish' et cetera (discussed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation*). So it could, with equal accuracy be translated as 'Mazda-given' ~ i.e. wisdom acquired by the ear which is Wisdom-given; the innate/heavenly wisdom which is Wisdom-given. A multi-dimensioned play on the meaning of 'wisdom/Wisdom' ~ using two separate words *x ratu-* and *mazdā-*. For the meaning(s) of *x ratu-* and how it evolved from the Gathas to the YAv. texts, see *Part Three: Xratu*.

Yy22.25 is another YAv. text which speaks of the wisdom within and wisdom acquired by the ear. It says,

āснаhe x raθwō mazdadātahe gaošō.srūtahe x raθwō mazdadātahe••

"...of the understanding which is innate [*āснаhe x raθwō*] and Mazda-made, and of that which is heard by the ear [*gaošō.srūtahe x raθwō*]" Mills translation SBE 31, p. 272; Avestan words from Geldner 1P p. 86.

In his translation of Yy22.25, Mills omits 'Mazda-made for the understanding that is heard by the ear. But as you can see from the Avestan, the *mazdadātahe* is used with both the wisdom within and the wisdom acquired by the ear. I would translate it '...of the innate Wisdom-given understanding; of the ear-heard Wisdom-given understanding...'

⁶ Darmesteter translation in SBE 23, p. 13; the phrase in YAv. is as follows,

āsnəm x ratūm mazdadātəm yazamaide gaošō.srūtəm x ratūm mazdadātəm yazamaide•• *Sirozah* II, § 2, Geldner 2P p. 263. The identical words appear in the YAv. *Sirozah* I § 2, and also in *Sirozahs* I and II, §§ 29, SBE 23, pp. 4, 12, 20.

The idea is also expressed in the *Haft Ameshaspend (Haptan) Yasht*, a YAv. text.

āснаhe x raθwō mazdadātahe gaošō.srūtahe x raθwō mazdadātahe•• Yt. 2.1, Geldner 2P p. 69;
 "... to the heavenly Wisdom [*āснаhe x raθwō*], made by Mazda, and to the Wisdom acquired through the ear [*gaošō.srūtahe x raθwō*], made by Mazda." Yt. 2.1, Darmesteter's translation, SBE 23, p. 35.

⁷ SBE 23, p. 4, ft. 5. Darmesteter takes acc. sg. *āsnəm* as 'heavenly'.

However, Skjaervo 2003 also shows a YAv. stem *āsna-* which is used for two separate meanings, *āsna-* "born as one's own"; and *āsna-* "near". I think the meaning "born as one's own" supports the translation of acc. sg. *āsnəm x ratuš* as "innate wisdom", which is the way in which Mills translates the term in the many instances in which it appears in YAv. texts.

⁸ The word *asnqm* appears in the Gathas in Y46.3, although in a different context, and Insler in his commentary sees it as gen. pl. ("of the heavens") of the GAv. stem *asan-* 'heaven', Insler 1975 p. 264. However, this stem *asan-* (which ends in a consonant), does not generate a gen. sg. declension YAv. *āsnahe* which is used to describe the wisdom within. So I (respectfully) question whether Darmesteter's translation 'heavenly' could be based on the stem *asan-* 'heaven'. However, if we think about it, Darmesteter's 'heavenly' ~ especially as he explains it (inborn intellect, intuition), although a bit interpretive, is consistent with the thought of the Gathas, because Zarathushtra's 'heaven' is a state of being that is Divine ~ the true (wholly

good) order of existence (*aša- vahišta-*) and its component parts (the amesha spenta) ~ a most-good existence (*ahu- vahišta-*) ~ qualities of the Divine that exist in man (are innate), albeit incompletely.

⁹ See in *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*.

¹⁰ SBE 23, pp. 4, 13, for good thinking *vohu- manah-*. These two types of wisdom are also mentioned in § 29 of *Sirozah I* and II, dedicated to the *mąθra- spənta-* 'the beneficial precepts' of Wisdom, SBE 23, pp. 12, 20 ~ which, if we think about it, can only be understood through good thinking.

¹¹ In *Part Six: Yasna 30.2*, I give my own translation of this verse, a brief discussion of its meaning, and a linguistic analysis with other translations for comparative purposes.

¹² In Gathic Avestan, *sraotā gəuš.āiš vahištā avaēnatā sūcā manəhā ... Y30.2*, 'Listen with (your) ears to (what are) most-good (things). Reflect with an illumined mind ...' my translation.

¹³ See in *Part Two*:

The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta; A Question of Reward and the Path; and The Houses of Paradise and Hell.

¹⁴ The word *sūcā* is instr. sg. ('with/through/by___') of the stem *sūc-*.

Skjaervo (2006) translates *sūc-* as 'glow, burning', deriving it from *saok-* 'to burn'.

Taraporewala 1951, based on a Skt. cognate translates *sūc-* as 'to shine, to illumine', commenting that the Pahlavi translators translate the word as *rōšn*, [which means 'light', 'shining'], and that a better translation for *sūcā* would be 'illumined' or 'enlightened'. p. 133.

I agree. And I would translate the phrase 'Reflect with (an) illumined (or light-filled) mind ...'. Fire was the only form of light that man could make in those ancient times. In the Gathas and later texts fire/light in its various forms is a metaphor for Wisdom, and Its attributes ~ the true order of existence (*aša-*) and its component parts (amesha spenta). It is interesting that in ancient Persian art illustrating the Shahnameh, an enlightened mind is depicted by showing the head of such a person with flames coming from it. True, these figures are Islamic. I do not know if fire is a significant symbol or metaphor in Islam (other than with the Sufis). But the Arabs who conquered Iran were desert warriors. Their culture did not have art forms such as existed in ancient Persian paintings. Therefore it is probable (in my view) that this art form of painting the heads of spiritually enlightened persons with flames coming from it, had its genesis in the pre-Islamic, Sasanian school of painting and art ~ indicating an enlightened being.

¹⁵ The attributes of the Divine that man has within him, albeit imperfectly, are truth, its comprehension good thinking, its embodiment in thought, word and action, its good rule, comprising a beneficial way of being, and man is capable of attaining these attributes completely, as detailed in the first few chapters 1.2 through 1.8 of *Part One* each of which is dedicated to a specific attribute of the Divine (amesha spenta).

¹⁶ As detailed in *Part Two: A Question of Immanence, Light, Glory, Fire*, and other chapters in *Part Two*.

¹⁷ In GAv., this part of Y43.15 reads as follows:

spəntəm aṭ θwā mazdā mənghī ahurā
hyaṭ mā vohū pairījasaṭ manəhā
dax šaṭ ušyāi tušnā maiīš vahištā ... Geldner 1P p. 146.

Geldner and Humbach/Faiss 2010 do not see *tušnā maiīš* in the last line as a compound word. Whereas Insler 1975, Taraporewala 1951 and Bartholomae do.

Insler 1975 translates the above part of this verse as follows: "Yes, I have already realized Thee to be [*spānta*- 'beneficial'], Wise Lord, when he attended me with good thinking and revealed [*dax šač*] ~ he the meditative one [*tušnā.maitiš*] ~ the best things [*vahišta*-] to be said [*ušyāi* ms. S1]..." Y43.15.

Taraporewala 1951 translates the above part of this verse as follows ~ he has added some words in round parentheses which are not in the Gathic text and are his interpretive aids: "(As) Divine [*spāntam*], indeed, O Mazda, have-I-recognized Thee, O Ahura, when through (Vohu) Mano, Good entered within me, pointing-out (that) silent-meditation [*tušnā.maitiš*] (is) the best [*vahištā*] for-the-growth [*ux šyāi* ms. J4] (of-the-Soul)..." Y43.15 citing a Rig Vedic parallel. p. 453.

Moulton (1912) EZ, translates the above part of this phrase as follows: "... when the still mind [*tušnā.maitiš*] taught me to declare what is best [*vahištā*] ..." Y43.15, p. 366.

¹⁸ Geldner (in Avestan script which I have transliterated) shows the words *tušnā maitiš* but he shows many other mss. variations, for both *ušyāi* (*ux šyāi*, *ušyā*, *ux šyā*) and *tušnā maitiš* (*tuš nā*; *tušnāi*; *tuš nāmaitiš*); Geldner 1P p. 146, Y43.15 ft. 5.

Insler 1975 following ms. S1 has chosen *ušyāi*, 'to be said' and sees *tušnā.maitiš* 'the meditative one' as a compound word.

Taraporewala 1951 following ms. J4, takes the word to be *ux šyāi* the dat. inf. of *vax š-*, *ux š-* 'to grow, to increase'. He agrees with Barth. that *tušnā.maitiš* is a compound, and translates the word as 'silent meditation.' He concludes that the idea of inner growth of the soul through silent meditation seems to be the idea here. pp. 453, 454.

Bartholomae: Taraporewala comments that Barth., (reading *ušyāi*) construes the word as dative inf. of *vac-*, to speak, thus translating the word 'to declare'. And on *tušnā maitiš*, Taraporewala comments that Barth. takes it as a compound and translates it as 'a quiet submissive mind' (among other things), and also compares Av. *tušnā* with Skt. *tuṣṇīm*, 'quietly, silently, which he says may ultimately be derived from *tuš-*, to be content, p. 454.

Andreas: Tarap. comments that Andreas reads *ušyāi* but construes the word as dat. inf. of *uš-* 'to satisfy, to please'. Tarap. (1951) p. 454.

These mss. variations, and the differing opinions of linguists give us some insight into the difficulty of decoding GAv. ~ a language which for more than 1,000 years had become unknown. But fortunately, Zarathushtra expresses his ideas multiple times in multiple ways, so although a given verse may produce translation differences, the underlying ideas can be arrived at.

¹⁹ Insler 1975 p. 63, ftn. 6.

²⁰ See Part Six: Yasna 43.

²¹ See in Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta, A Question of Reward and the Path and The Houses of Paradise and Hell.

²² See Part Six: Yasna 50.6 for a discussion of this verse, and other translations.

²³ Here are some additional verses in which the Lord (who is) Wisdom 'instructs':

"Thou who dost guard truth and good thinking for eternity ... do Thou, Wise Lord, instruct me (in these very things) through the eloquence befitting Thy spirit [*mainyu-* 'way of being']... the things by means of which

the foremost existence shall come about here." Y28.11, Insler 1975. Here the 'instructing' is through the Lord Wisdom's beneficial way of being (His *mainyu-*) ~ the way of being that generates good thinking in many verses in Y43. For the meaning of *mainyu-* as a 'way of being' see *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*.

"Now, I shall speak of the Greatest One of all, praising with truth Him who is beneficent through His [*spanta-mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] to those who exist. May the Wise Lord listen, in Whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking. May He instruct me in His best intentions [*x ratū*]." Y45.6, Insler 1975. Here the Lord, Wisdom, 'instructs' after Zarathushtra 'takes counsel with good thinking'; the word *x ratū* is translated by Insler as 'intentions', but it is translated by many good linguists, as 'reasoning' 'intellect' in GA., see (*Part Three: Xratu*). I would translate the last sentence *ahyā x ratū frō mā sāstū vahištā* as '... Through His reasoning may He teach me the most-good (things).' Y45.6 The word *x ratū* is instr. sg. (Skjaervo 2006), thus 'through/with/by reasoning'. And Zarathushtra's thought regarding what is 'most good' is detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*. This lovely, multi-dimensional verse is discussed in *Part Six: Yasna 45.6*.

²⁴ See *Part One: Differences in the Spirit of Friendship*.

²⁵ See in *Part One*:

Manthras, an Introduction; *The Manthra of Truth Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu)*; *The Manthra of Choice, Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo)*; and *The Manthra of the Divine and the Human, Yenghe Haatam*.

There is a fourth manthra which, although not as popular today, in ancient times was venerated by early Zoroastrians, it is the A *Airyema Ishyo, Y54.1*, which I think of as a manthra of friendship. It is detailed in *Part Six: Yasna 54.1, A Airyema Ishyo*.

²⁶ Here is an example of the Gathas being called 'manthras' in YAv. text; and the 'manthra' being called *spanta-* 'beneficial'. Avestan words are from Geldner; the translations are by Mills, except that I add my translation in square brackets where my differences with Mills are material.

Yy7.4 "... the heard recital of the Gathas, the Mathras well-composed and well-delivered..." Mills translation, SBE 31 p. 223.

Yy1.13 "And I announce and complete (my Yasna) to the Bounteous Mathra [*māθrahe spantahe ašaonō* 'of the beneficial Word (which is) truth-filled],..." SBE 31 p. 199; Av. words from Geldner 1P p. 10.

In the following examples, Zarathushtra's 'law against the daevas' refers to the Gathas (and not to the *Vendidad*, which was composed long after Av. times, and therefore long after the following YAv. Yasnas):

Yy4.12, "And we worship the Mathra Spenta ... the glorious and of a truth, the law revealed against the Daevas, the Zarathushtrian law..." p. 221.

Yy17.13, "And we worship the Mathra-spenta (the bounteous words of reason), the Zarathushtrian law against the Daevas, and its long descent." p. 259. The words in round parentheses are in Mills' translation.

Yy25.6, "And we worship the Mathra Spenta verily glorious (as it is) even the law pronounced against the Daevas, the Zarathushtrian law, and its long descent..." p. 277.

The linguistics of the *Vendidad* establish that it was composed in grammatically faulty YAv., and indeed some of its internal contents led Darmesteter to express the opinion that it (or at least parts of it) were composed in Sasanian times (SBE 5, pages xxxvii - xli), thus ~ whether we consider its faulty Avestan, or some of its contents ~ there can be no dispute that the *Vendidad* would have been composed during a time period when the priests were no longer fluent in Avestan, and the grammar of Avestan was no longer well understood. The *Vendidad*, therefore, could not have been in existence during Avestan times, when the foregoing YAv.

Yasnas were composed, which speak of Zarathushtra's 'law against the daevas' and describe it as ancient ("...and its long descent..."). The harsh misanthropic character of large parts of the *Vendidad* is itself very different from the benign, life affirming, life celebrating, character of the Gathas, the YAv. Yasnas, and even most (but not all) of the YAv. Yashts and Fragments.

²⁷ See *Part Four: Castes & Heredity*.

²⁸ It is interesting that in the 6th book of the Dinkard, which is a Pahlavi work and which purports to be a collection of the words of ancient Zoroastrian sages (ancient even to the author(s) of this Pahlavi text), it states,

"And this, too *was* considered by them thus, that these are the three species of mankind: ~ One is the Gathic, one the Hadha-mathric, *and* one the Dadik. The association (hamih) of him who is Gathic is with the sacred beings, ...; and the extent of *his* wealth is due to the members of the community and *religious* feasts..." as translated by E. W. West in ft. 2 SBE 37, p. 5 (words in italics are insertions by West as interpretive aids and words in round parentheses are also in his translation, indicating the Pahlavi word).

At first thought, one might conclude that the dependence on the community of the Gathic type of person for his livelihood could simply have been describing a priest who depended on the community for his living. However such a person (the 'Gathic' person) is not identified as a 'priest' of any kind in this section of the Dinkard. Therefore, 'the Gathic' person could have been any person who spent his time thinking about 'the sacred beings', and did not spend his time on such mundane things as earning a living, or accumulating wealth, calling to mind the Hindu and Buddhist sanyasis who depend on the charity of the community for their food.

But in either event, it should be remembered that this Pahlavi text was written in or around the 9th Century CE or later ~ a few centuries after the Arab invasion of Iran and more than 1,000 years after Zarathushtra's time ~ and thus may not have reflected the habits and practices of Zarathushtra's society.

²⁹ Possibly for a short period within a given lifetime, or possibly for the period of most of an entire lifetime. If Zarathushtra believed in some sort of reincarnation (see *Part One: Reincarnation*), even the period of an entire life time would be but a small segment of the over-all journey of a soul, which in other segments might well live an active life with the many and varied experiences also necessary for the acquisition of wisdom.