

Introduction to Part One: The Basics.

This *Part* has been written for those who want a general understanding of Zarathushtra's thought.

The first chapter 1.2 *Quick Definitions* and then the chapters after 1.10, *The Identity of the Divine*, are all short, basic and easy. Older versions of some of them have appeared in other publications, but have been updated here.

Chapters 1.3 through 1.10 are a bit more detailed, so that you can see the evidence that supports the ways in which I think Zarathushtra defines the qualities of the Divine (later called amesha spenta), and his profound ideas on the nature and identity of the Divine ~ ideas which were totally new to his culture, and are unusual even today, but which have been largely forgotten under the influence of other religious paradigms. Therefore, when you see these definitions of the amesha spenta in other chapters, I thought you might not find them credible, unless you could first see the supporting evidence which has been detailed in Chapters 1.3 through 1.10.

Zarathushtra's ideas on the identity of the Divine in particular, have long been forgotten under the influence of the dominating religions under which Zoroastrians have lived for more than 1,000 years. Yet they are an essential and beautiful part of his teachings.

And in chapter 1.3 *The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*, I also detail the evidence which establishes that the idea of cosmic dualism ~ two uncreated Entities, one all good ('God') and one all evil (the Devil) ~ is absent from the Gathas, and in fact is contrary to the evidence of the Gathas (it appears only in later Pahlavi texts, written after the Arab invasion of Iran).

But if you do not want all that detail, you may prefer to skip chapters 1.3 through 1.10 (relying just on the Quick Definitions); although if you do so, you will miss understanding his new ideas on the nature and identity of the Divine.

In addition to the basics, this *Part* touches on some age-old questions such as: Why do 'bad' things happen to 'good' people? Are natural disasters the 'wrongful choices' of the Divine?¹ And many others. It also touches upon some rather lovely ancient Zoroastrian traditions and customs which could be adapted for use today, to enrich spiritual experience.

To ascertain Zarathushtra's teachings as accurately as possible, I generally try to be as objective as I can ~ using logic and evidence in arriving at conclusions. But we also need to consider whether, and how, his teachings are relevant to the way we live our lives ~ how these teachings impact living beings, in their day to day existence ~ and throughout the book I do indeed touch on these aspects of his teachings as well.

Finally, towards the end of *Part One* (before the chapters on the 3 foundational manthras) I have included a few short subjective chapters as well ~ giving some quick bird's eye views of Zarathushtra's teachings and how they are relevant to life (and why I love them so much). And *Part One* ends with a simple YAv. Blessing, which you may like.

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¹ See *Part One: A Friendly Universe*.