

Introduction to Part One: The Basics.

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

To give you Zarathushtra's teachings as accurately as possible, I try to be as objective as I can. But we also need to consider how his teachings are relevant to our lives today ~ how they impact living beings, in their day to day existence in this 21st century.

So I decided to start this *Part* with a chapter called *A Sky Full Of Stars*. It gives an overview of some of Zarathushtra's key teachings, and why I find them so relevant to life today.

Next, Zarathushtra did not compose his songs in English, nor do we know Avestan. And sometimes, there is no one-word or two-word English equivalent for a given Avestan word.

There are 7 Avestan terms that are central to Zarathushtra's thought. They inform his new understanding of the Divine, as well as every aspect of his new envisionment.

It is not possible to understand his teachings with any degree of accuracy unless we understand what he had in mind for these 7 terms, based on both cutting edge linguistics, and also on how he uses these 7 terms in the Gathas.

For those who just want the basics, the chapter that follows called *The Significant Seven*, gives quick definitions of these 7 terms, and touches briefly on how they are central to Zarathushtra's envisionment ~ an envisionment which was totally new to his culture, and in many ways is unusual even today, but key aspects of which have long been forgotten, under the influence of other religious paradigms.

You might not find these quick definitions credible, unless you see the supporting evidence. So all the evidence on which those quick definitions are based, are in the chapters that follow (in this *Part One*). These chapters are entitled:

The Beneficial-Sacred Way Of Being, Spenta Mainyu;
Truth, Asha;
Good Thinking, Vohu Manah;
Beneficial-Sacred Embodied Truth, Spenta Aramaiti;
Good Rule, Vohu Xshathra;
Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat;
The Nature Of The Divine; and
The Identity of the Divine.

Zarathushtra's ideas on the last two in particular ~ the nature and identity of the Divine ~ 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 *The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*, I also give some 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).

It has often been said that cosmic dualism is supremely logical, and is the only explanation for the existence of evil in 'creation'. But that is true, only if one's envisionment of 'God' is that of a separate

Being ~ separate from the 'creation' it created. That is not Zarathushtra's envisionment of the identity of the Divine. Nor is cosmic dualism anything like Zarathushtra's (logical, rational, and beautiful) ideas about the origins of evil, and how evil will be defeated and eliminated from existence ~ with certainty (*because* of the freedom to choose) ~ one of his interesting paradoxes.

You may prefer to skip the detailed chapters (listed above) and rely just on the quick definitions (in *The Significant Seven*). But if you do, you will miss understanding his new and beautiful ideas on the nature and identity of the Divine, which are central to his envisionment.

In this *Part One* I also touches on Zarathushtra's ideas (as I understand them) about 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. And it touches on some rather lovely ancient Zoroastrian traditions and customs which could be adapted for use today, to enrich spiritual experience.

Towards the end of *Part One* I give an overview of the 3 foundational manthras of the religion ~ the *Ahuna Vairya* (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*); the *Asha Vahishta* (*Ashem Vohu*), and the *Yenghe Haatam*.

And *Part One* ends with a simple YAv. Blessing, which you may like.

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¹ See *Part One: A Friendly Universe*.