

LGBTQ+ & Zarathushtra's Teachings.

As the late, and greatly missed, Professor K. D. Irani often told us, Zarathushtra's way is reflective. He requires us to think,¹ ~ not surprising in one whose idea of the Divine is Wisdom personified. Yet the human condition is such that we tend to become bonded to (enslaved by) the traditions and prejudices with which we have been raised.

Every human being has prejudices of one sort or another.

Even when a given tradition or prejudice is illogical, it can be (and often is) held by people who in other respects are open-minded, well educated, and indeed pride themselves on their scientific, intellectual and people loving accomplishments.

Each generation, each culture, has its own challenges. And among the challenges of our times and culture, is a longstanding prejudice that has generated, and continues to generate, injustice, cruelty, suffering. It is prejudice against different sexual orientations. Of course, there are other prejudices today with which we have to contend ~ serious ones ~ that also generate injustice, cruelty, suffering. I have discussed some of them in other chapters.² So in this chapter, I will limit our discussion to prejudice based on sexual orientations.

If we wish to follow Zarathushtra's teachings, if we wish to worship/celebrate Wisdom (*mazda* ~ an enlightened state of being), we cannot turn a blind eye to prejudices that harm others.

This is not something that I have just made up. An ancient Pahlavi text tells us,

"... Be of good mind and positive. ...
Pursue knowledge and advance learning ...
overcome prejudice ...".
Shahin Bekhradnia translation.³

In many ancient cultures, sexual orientation differences were an accepted part of life. In others they were not. So the question has been asked: What was Zarathushtra's view? Did he condemn sexual orientation differences as 'wrong'? Well there is nothing in the Gathas, nor in any Avestan text *that was written during Avestan times*, that condemns or bans differences in sexual orientation (so far as I am aware). It was not until the *Videvdad* (*Vendidad*) that this kind of tyranny of the religious establishment was seen ~ controlling so very many minuscule aspects of the way a person could live his/her life in 1,001 invasive ways, one of which was condemning different sexual orientations.⁴

We know that the *Vendidad* was not written during Avestan times, because the form of Avestan in which it is written is full of grammatically errors.⁵ So that text could only have been written long after Avestan times when the priests who composed this text were no longer fluent in Avestan. Nor do we know the geographic area which produced the *Vendidad*. So we do not know what other cultural practices or traditions (unrelated to Zarathushtra's teachings) were incorporated into that text. The mind-set of large portions of the *Vendidad* is cruel, tyrannical, greed-driven ~ promoting a fear-based slave mentality and rules that increased the wealth and power of the religious establishment ~ the very kind of mind-set against which Zarathushtra rebelled in the Gathas.

Our ideas of what is 'good or evil', 'right or wrong', may vary greatly ~ even from person to person, let alone culture to culture, or generation to generation. And one of the things that keeps Zarathushtra's teachings

perennially relevant is that he does not give us fact specific lists of do-s and dont-s which, with the passage of time, become embalmed in obsolescence.

Instead he gives us a simple, timeless framework through which we can discover answers for ourselves, based on the most current available knowledge.

Specifically, he tells us to use our minds/hearts/spirits to search for [truth \(aša-\)](#) ~ factual truths, scientific truths, social truths, emotional truths, spiritual truths, ~ all the many facets of an order of existence that is true (correct, right, good), *aša-*.⁶ And he does not exempt himself from that search ("[... so long as I shall be able and be strong, so long shall I look in quest of truth. Truth, shall I see thee as I continue to acquire ... good thinking ...](#)" Y28: 4 - 5, Insler 1975).

In another Gatha verse, after expressing his anguish to the Divine about whether anyone will ever listen to his attempts to explain Wisdom's teachings, he in effect comforts himself with his understanding of Wisdom's response, (to his anguish), a response that reassures him that he has already taken the necessary first step ~ he has come to truth for instruction.

Y43:11 "[...when I was first instructed by your words, painful seemed to me my faith in men](#) [the Av. word is more literally 'in mortals'] [to bring to realization that which ye told me is \[vahišta- 'most good'\] ...](#)" Insler 1975.

Y43:12 "[But then You said to me, you have come to truth for instruction, ...](#)" my translation.⁷

[Coming to truth for instruction](#), means wanting [truth](#) to be his teacher, wanting to learn from [truth](#). So here again we have the on-going search for truth, the desire to comprehend it, which is a fundament of Wisdom's teaching (as understood by Zarathushtra in the Gathas).⁸

So when I come across a question or problem in my own time period, I use his framework or system to help me find answers. I (try to) make truth my teacher.

This framework ~ having truth as our teacher ~ requires that we first consult the most up to date scientific information available ~ factual truth; and apply to the problem Zarathushtra's teaching that we should think, speak and act in a beneficial way, with friendship, compassion, lovingkindness, justice (as in being fair), ~ qualities that are the truths of mind/heart/spirit; that we should not act in ways that are the opposite of such truths ~ ignorant, false, deceitful, hating, harming, hurting, being cruel, being destructive, victimizing, being inimical etc.⁹

Keeping these principles in mind, let us see how Zarathushtra's teachings apply to the question of LGBTQ+ orientations.

First, the search for truth requires that we look at the science ~ which currently is incomplete, on-going. We still do not know how many species of life forms exist on our planet, but scientific research has discovered that different sexual orientations exist in at least 450 different species.¹⁰ In humans, a study of almost half a million people, published in *Science* in 2019,¹¹ has established that there is no one 'Gay' gene. And there is no one 'Straight' gene. But to the extent that sexual orientation is affected by our genes, it is polygenic, meaning that hundreds or even thousands of genes make tiny contributions to the trait. And polygenic traits can be influenced also by environment.

To illustrate: A person's height ~ tall or short ~ is polygenic, but a person's height can also be affected by not having enough to eat as a child (environment). In short, our knowledge to date of the causes of sexual orientation, although incomplete, shows that a huge number of factors contribute to sexual orientation, including biology, psychology, and life experiences.

But in all the diversity of on-going research and expert opinions on this subject, one thing stands out. The factors that influence genuine LGBTQ+ orientation are largely beyond an individual's control.

In the Gathas (unlike later texts) nothing in nature is described as intrinsically 'bad', or 'evil'. And every description of 'evil' is the product of wrongful choices.¹²

So (applying this Gatha teaching), just as being tall or short, or not having enough to eat, cannot be intrinsically 'wrong', in the same way LGBTQ+ orientations, in and of themselves, cannot be intrinsically 'wrong'. It is the choices we make with our sexual orientations ~ whether heterosexual or LGBTQ+ ~ that result in the creation of 'good' and 'evil', 'right' and 'wrong'.

If a heterosexual person uses his/her sexual orientation to harm, injure, victimize anyone (whether children or adults) that would be wrong. And it would be equally wrong if an LGBTQ+ person uses his/her sexual orientation to harm anyone (whether children or adults). In both instances, the conduct itself would be wrong ~ not because of a particular sexual orientation in and of itself, but because it is not consensual, or because such orientations are used to harm, injure, victimize, ~ conduct that is the opposite of the true (correct), good order of existence (*aša- vahišta*).

In short, it is the choices we make with our physical traits, that create 'good' and 'evil' ~ not the traits themselves. How then could it be 'wrong' for an LGBTQ+ couple to live in a good, loving, consensual relationship that harms no one?

On the contrary (continuing to apply Zarathushtra's teachings), it would be wrong to discriminate against people, mock them, ostracize them, victimize them, harm them, because of their sexual orientation. It would be wrong to make exclusionary rules that prevent such people from loving each other, living together, and being good, productive members of our communities and societies.

There is a verse in the Gathas that has been interpreted as condemning homosexuality. But if we want truth to be our teacher, it is clear that this interpretation is not accurate for the following reasons.

The applicable Avestan word has not yet been decoded.¹³ Linguists differ widely in translating it (as you will see). But even if we assume (for the sake of argument) that the word refers to LGBTQ+ orientations, the conclusion that its use involves condemnation or mocking *for that reason*, is not in the language or context of the verse. It is an interpretation that some modern translators have read into the verse ~ reflecting the prejudice of certain Pahlavi writers, which perhaps resonate with such modern translators' own prejudices ~ personal and societal. Indeed Neriosangh Dhaval's Sanskrit translation of this verse (16th century CE) contains no mention of sexual orientation, indicating that there was ~ in the tradition ~ a famous, well recognized authority who saw nothing about sexual orientation in that verse.¹⁴

To understand Zarathushtra's intent, we need to be aware of certain facts.

In the Gathas, he had the courage to repeatedly speak out against, and condemn, the cruel, tyrannical practices of the powerful establishments of his culture (priestly and secular) which were causing so much suffering in his society. Here are just two (of many) examples,

Priestly: "... the rich Karpan [a type of priest] chose the rule of tyrants and deceit rather than truth." Y32:12, Insler 1975;

Secular: "Even the Kavis [kings, chiefs, rulers] have continually fixed their intentions on capturing and plundering the riches of this world, ..." Y32:14, Insler 1975 translation.

Because of his outspoken criticisms, Zarathushtra was ostracized, persecuted.

"To what land to flee? Where shall I go to flee? They exclude (me) from my family and from my clan ..." Y46:1, Insler 1975 translation;

"Yes, throughout my lifetime, I have been condemned as the greatest defiler, I who try to satisfy the poorly protected (creatures) with truth, Wise One ..." Y49:1, Insler 1975 translation.

So Zarathushtra did not mince words. Despite ostracism, despite life threatening persecution, he was an outspoken critic of what he considered to be wrong. With that in mind, let us now look at the verse which some translators interpret as condemning or mocking homosexuality (Y51:12), and (for context) the verse which immediately precedes it (Y51:11).

Zarathushtra, speaking of himself in the 3d person, first asks rhetorically (in Y51:11), who is his ally ~ who is counselled by truth (*aša-*); who allies himself with beneficial thoughts, words and actions that embody truth (*spənta- ārmaiti-*); who is a person of good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) ~ committed to comprehending truth; one who is ready for the task? In other Gatha verses, this task ~ sometimes specifically called 'great' ~ is described as understanding, implementing, and spreading, knowledge of truth, so that what is false can be eliminated, and the whole of existence can become wholly good, wholly truth-possessing,¹⁵ ~ which is why in this verse, Insler implies the word 'great' ~ "the (great) task". Here is the verse.

"... which man has been an ally to Zarathushtra Spitama? Which one has taken counsel with truth? With whom is [*spənta- ārmaiti-* 'beneficial embodied truth'] allied? Which man of good thinking has shown himself to be lofty (enough) for the (great) task?" Y51:11, Insler 1975 translation.

Each of these qualities ~ truth, its beneficial embodiment, its good comprehension ~ are qualities of the Divine which all of us ~ irrespective of sexual orientation ~ also have, although imperfectly.

He then concludes, "In no such way did the roguish Kavi [ruler] satisfy this Zarathushtra Spitama at Earth-bridge [Insler's ft. "Probably a place name"], since he rejected (him who) arrived at that spot, although his two draft animals were trembling from wandering and from cold." Y51:12, Insler 1975 translation.

The Avestan word which Insler has translated as 'roguish [*vaēpya-*]', other linguists have translated in widely different ways, including 'trembler, shaker, quaker', as well as a person who is homosexual, as well as the ruler's sexual partner of the same or opposite sex. And in a Younger Avestan text, this Avestan word [*vaēpya-*] has been translated as a 'poison-squirting serpent'. I have footnoted the evidence so that you can judge for yourself.¹⁶ So this Avestan word has not yet been decoded. Zarathushtra's intent may have been to describe a chieftain whose reputation for falsehood and cruelty was as toxic and deadly as a poison squirting serpent, or whose reputation was that of a cruel man ~ one who made people tremble, shake, quake.

But arguing about the meaning of this word misses the point that Zarathushtra was making in these two verses, which is that this powerful chieftain was so opposed to the teachings of Wisdom, (truth, its good comprehension, its beneficial embodiment in thought word and action, its good rule), that he denied Zarathushtra and his 2 exhausted draft animals, food and shelter, a warm place to sleep ~ in bitter cold weather ~ in a culture that placed a high value (a moral obligation) on hospitality.

To identify that ruler by name would have been an open insult in that culture (unlike our culture today). But Zarathushtra was describing a specific event for a specific reason ~ the hostility of a chieftain to Wisdom's path of truth. To be credible, Zarathushtra had to identify this person in a way that his listeners would have understood. So, (conforming to the conventions of his time),¹⁷ he identified this chieftain, not by name, but by location and reputation ~ a reputation described by the Avestan word *vaēpya-* which has not yet been decoded.

Throughout the Gathas, Zarathushtra had the courage to speak out ~ repeatedly ~ against many wrongdoings ~ lies, deceit, murder, theft, cruelty, bondage tyranny, greed, predatory violence etc. ~ even though such wrongs were committed by the most powerful in the land, and even though he was persecuted as a result. If he had thought different sexual orientations were 'wrong', would he not have been equally forthright in condemning them, the way he openly identified and condemned so many wrongs?

He doesn't. Not once.

Based on the absence of any condemnation of LGBTQ+ orientations in the Gathas (and even, so far as I am aware, in any later Avestan texts which were written during Avestan times), it is not reasonable to interpret this Gatha verse (Y51:12) as condemning or mocking the sexual orientation of that un-named chieftain. Yet some modern translators, have done exactly that. They assume that Zarathushtra used an "opprobrious" word as an unsult ~ mocking that chieftain (or the chieftain's partner) for his sexual orientation.

We all are human, and subject to error. But integrity requires that we guard against infusing into Gatha verses, unsupported interpretations (whether our own or those of certain schools of much later thought) ~ that are inconsistent with the context of a given verse (the micro context), and of the Gathas as a whole (the macro context). Unfortunately, such subjective, inconsistent, interpretations abound in translations of the Gathas in many instances (unrelated to sexual orientations), even by first class linguists ~ both non-Zoroastrians and also Zoroastrians,¹⁸ ~ which is why it is so important for Zoroastrians today to acquire cutting edge knowledge of Avestan from professional linguists, instead of having to blindly accept their interpretations.

Today we have largely forgotten the central role that love plays in Zarathushtra's thought.¹⁹ Whether a person is LGBTQ + or heterosexual, each one of us is part of the family of all the living, in which each person, each life form, has value.

And each has within it, something of the Divine.

His teachings require that we be good to each other, watch out for each other. Indeed, mutual, loving help is necessary ~ a prerequisite ~ for a person's spiritual evolution to completeness (*haurvatat*) and non-deathness (*ameretat*), an enlightened state of being (which is Wisdom ~ the Divine. None of us can make it on our own. To make it, we have to both give and receive loving help.²⁰

In the almost 4,000 years since Zarathushtra's time period, Zoroastrians have accumulated traditions and ideas from other sources that have influenced our mind-sets in ways that have nothing to do with Zarathushtra's teachings, and indeed, often are contrary to them (and to the worship of wisdom/Wisdom). Some of these traditions and ideas have trapped us in obsolescence, in prejudices that harm the innocent.

But Wisdom's teachings enable course corrections. The search for truth ~ having truth as our teacher ~ in all aspects of our existence enables on-going relevance, the recognition of obsolescence, the correction of our prejudices, and an evolution towards embodying the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence with each choice in thought, word and action, thereby healing existence by moving it towards truth personified.

So simple. So profound. So beautiful.

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¹ The ways in which Zarathushtra uses *manah* 'mind/thinking/thought', are not limited to intellectual functions. This word includes the full spectrum of our conscious (awake) capabilities ~ intellectual, emotional, creative, insightful, etc. Detailed in *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*.

² Detailed in the following chapters:

On the *Home Page: Liberating Zarathushtra's Relevance: 1: Social Justice & Gender Equality*;

In *Part One: Gender Equality*; and *A Teaching For All Mankind*;

In *Part Four: Tradition & The Menses*; and *The Absence of Castes*.

³ From the *Ashirwad* part of the Pazand wedding ceremony in which the priest gives advice on how to live our lives in accordance with the teachings of the religion, as translated from its Farsi translation into English by Shahin Bekhradnia, who has generously given me permission to quote from her translation.

⁴ For example, in chapter VIII, §§ 31 - 32, of the *Videvdad* (*Vendidad*), Darmesteter translation, SBE Vol. 4, pp. 101 - 102.

⁵ Zaehner 1961 in *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, (Phoenix Press reprint 2003), referring to the *Videvdad* (*Vendidad*), speaks of

"the appalling grammatical confusion that characterizes that ... work." p. 162.

And referring to the "... gross grammatical blunders ..." of this text, he says,

"... Indeed, in the *Videvdad* we have the impression that the authors are not only writing in a language that is not their own, but are doing so in one, the rudiments of whose grammar they have quite failed to master. ..." p. 26.

⁶ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

⁷ This lovely verse is translated and discussed, along with translations by Insler and other eminent linguists, in *Part Six: Yasna 43:12*, a chapter which also illustrates how even excellent linguists have read into their translations of this Gatha verse, ideas from much later religious paradigms which are inconsistent with (and alien to) Zarathushtra's thought, and even to the thought of later Avestan texts.

⁸ Detailed in *Part One: The Search For Truth*; and *The Freedom To Choose*.

⁹ The qualities that are included in the meaning of *asha* as well as the qualities that are its opposites, are detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

¹⁰ See an article by Bill Sullivan, a molecular biologist, and Professor at Indiana University School of Medicine, at <https://theconversation.com/stop-calling-it-a-choice-biological-factors-drive-homosexuality-122764>.

¹¹ As reported in the PBS News Hour, August 29, 2019 (at pbs.org), reporting on an article that appeared in *Science*, at that time. This PBS Report also included comments from other scientists on this research, and on this field of study in general.

¹² Detailed in *Part One: Good & Evil*.

¹³ Zarathushtra's Gathas were composed in the oldest form of the Avestan language probably not earlier than 2,000 BCE and more likely around roughly 1,700 BCE (detailed in *Part Four: Zarathushtra's Date & Place*). But in the many centuries that followed, due to destructive wars in which texts were burned and the learned killed, knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the Avestan language became unknown for more than 1,000 years. Thanks to the amazing devotion of the priests who recited the Gathas (and other Avestan texts) as part of the ritual of worship for more than 1,000 years, and who copied and recopied texts down through the centuries, the Gathas survived to our times. And thanks to the efforts of western scholars who were/are professional Indo-Iranian philologists, the Avestan language

has gradually been decoded, to the point where it is now roughly 80% decoded (based on verbal advice to me from the late Professor Insler).

¹⁴ Other chapters in *Parts Four* and *Five* detail evidence which establishes that the Pahlavi 'translators' no longer understood the grammar and vocabulary of the Avestan language. Their 'translations' were more in the nature of traditional information that had been passed down from generation to generation, which suffered greatly in accuracy because of the killing of the learned, and the loss of knowledge that followed the fall of the Achaemenian Empire (which the Pahlavi texts themselves describe), and later was even worse following the Arab invasion of Iran. In fact the earliest Pahlavi texts were written following 200 + years of textual silence.

¹⁵ See for example, Y29:11, which speaks of the "great task" which is quoted and discussed in *Part Two: The Solution Of Yasna 29*; and see also Y46:14 ("great task"); Y51:11 and 16 ("task"); and Y53:7 ("task" twice).

¹⁶ The following translations of the Avestan word *vaēpya-* in Y51:12 demonstrate that this Gatha verse Y51:12, cannot be construed as standing for the proposition that Zarathushtra condemned (or mocked) any particular sexual orientation. Let us start with the full verse.

"In no such way did the roguish Kavi [*vaēpyō kavinō*] satisfy this Zarathushtra Spitama at Earth-bridge [Insler's ft. 13 "Probably a place name.], since he rejected (him who) arrived at that spot, although his two draft animals were trembling from wandering and from cold." Gatha Y51:12, Insler 1975 translation.

Translations of this entire verse by other linguists differ from Insler's translation, but for our purposes, let us limit ourselves to the applicable words, *vaēpyō kavinō* which linguists have translated as follows:

Skjaervo 2006: translates the stem *vaēpya-* as 'trembler, shaker, quaker' derived from the Avestan root *vaēp-*; he gives the Vedic cognates *viprá-, vépa-, vépas-*;

[My comment: So was it Zarathushtra's intent to describe a chieftain who had the reputation of making people shake, tremble, quake?].

Insler 1975: as 'roguish Kavi', without comment on this word.

Humbach 1991 (Vol. 2, p. 228): as 'Kaviyan catamite' (Vol. 1, p. 189); commenting that "*narō.vaēpya-* 'pederasty'," is so used in the *Videvdāt* (*Vendidad*); he offers no Vedic cognate(s).

[My comment: Av. *nar-* means 'man', so does its addition suggest that *vaēpya-* alone (without *narō*) was used for both male and female partners (outside marriage), as Moulton's translation suggests? But more important, the *Videvdāt* (*Vendidad*) was composed many centuries after Zarathushtra, and originated in an unknown part of the Middle East, long after our priests no longer were fluent in Avestan (as Zaehner and other professional linguists have established). It therefore is not credible to use the *Videvdāt* (*Vendidad*) in decoding an Old Avestan word, in the absence of other corroborating Avestan evidence. Parenthetically, opinions expressed in surviving Pahlavi texts ~ composed probably much later than the *Vendidad* ~ also should not automatically be used to decode Avestan words, because the Pahlavi 'translations' themselves make it abundantly clear that these "translators" had no understanding of Avestan as a language ~ its grammar and vocabulary ~ and that these "translations" were more in the nature of recollecting and recording what had been told to them; detailed with evidence in *Part Five: The Gathas*.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate the stem *vaēpya-* as 'Kaviyan sodomite' with no linguistic comment, and without providing any Vedic cognate(s) (pp. 155, 191);

Taraporewala 1951: as 'the-dupe-of-the-Kavi' (p. 794); his comments include the following:

that Mills, Kanga, and Bartholomae think the word means "paederast", based entirely on the Pahlavi;

that in the *Vendidad* "this root" is used for "committing paederasty ...";

that the Younger Avestan Yy9:20 has "*azōiš vīšō-vaēpahe* the poison-squirting serpent, ... from the same root";

that the Skt. root *vip-* (*vep-*) "has the meaning orig. of 'to tremble', 'to quiver'.";

that in the Rig Veda the root and its derivative words are used to describe the flames of Agni; as well as "the most fervent wise man"; "inspired", "thrilled or stirred";

He therefore concludes that *vaēpyō kavīnō* in our Gatha verse (Y51:12), should be translated "as 'dupes', 'those inspired (by the Kavis)'."

[My comment: This shows the uncertainty and pure guess-work involved in translating *vaēpyō* in our verse Y51:12].

Moulton 1912: as 'The Kavi's wanton'; commenting that the term is "opprobrious" (pp. 83, 386);

[My comment: The English word 'wanton' can mean a male or female partner, outside marriage ~ it is not limited to a different sexual orientation].

Bartholomae's translation is the same as Moulton's.

Neriosangh's & the Pahlavi translations (from Mills' translations (into English) of:

(1) Neriosangh's Sanskrit translation of this verse Y51:12 (collated by Mills from 5 manuscripts, p. ix), and

(2) the Pahlavi 'translation' (collated by Mills from all known manuscripts (p. ix) ~ known to Mills at that time ~ as set forth in Mills 1894, *A Study Of The Five Zarathushtrian Gathas*).

These translations do not make much sense (to me). Whether the fault lies with Mills, or with Neriosangh and the Pahlavi authors, I do not know. Mills has inserted (b) and (c) to indicate the 2d and 3d lines of this Gatha verse.

From Neriosangh Dhaval's Sanskrit translation (15th century CE); translated into English by Mills; I have added nothing.

Y51:12 "They do not understand what the two *essential necessities* are in the world, on the bridge, or interval, of winter; [that is, food and clothing] (b) when, or through which, I Jarathustra Spitamana am rejoiced. (c) This *one* (their representative) is *thus in his ignorance* not advancing toward [friendship] with me, in the birth-cold time (that is, *now* when I am naked against the winter's cold as a new-born child (?))." (Mills, p. 357).

[My comment: Nothing about sexual orientation in Neriosangh's 'translation'].

From the Pahlavi 'translation'; translated into English by Mills): I have added nothing.

Y51:12 "Far from satisfying me is the Kik, the paederast, in regard to both of the two particulars, [food and clothing], on the path of winter (b) *far from satisfying me* who am Zartusht, the Spitaman, with whom he is; that is (or where,) he incites me with his incitation (?) in *my bodily sensations*; [that is, a person comes, and *thus* also they (or he) would do it to me]; (c) *and* this one who is *doing* [that to us], is also leading us on, even in *our* progress in the cold [of a winter] of accustomed sin." (Mills p. 357).

¹⁷ In that ancient culture, the naming of names (and avoiding doing so) involved considerations with which we today may not be familiar, and which may not parallel our thought processes or customs. For example, Zarathushtra mentions the object of his worship by name ~ 'Wisdom', 'Lord' ~ in almost every verse. Yet he never mentions ~ not even once ~ the names of any of the deities of his culture, even though throughout the Gathas, he condemns these deities whose religious practices (through their priests) were so greed-driven, tyrannical, and brought so much suffering and grief to the people of his society. He consistently refers to these deities as *daēva-* (more than once) and *bagā-* (once) ~ both of which are generic words for 'deity' (which generic words he never uses for the deity he worships ~ 'Wisdom' *mazdā-* ~ probably because those generic words for 'deity' carried so much baggage in the mind-set of his culture).

In some respects, this custom of not naming the names of persons who are disapproved, survived among Parsi Zoroastrians in India, at least through the middle of the last century. For example, if a family member was ostracized for not conforming to Zoroastrian traditions, the name of that person was not allowed to be mentioned in the family. Having left India in 1956 (initially to attend college), and having returned there only for visits, I do not know whether this particular custom has survived to the present time.

¹⁸ The following chapters of this web-book demonstrate how translators have injected many of their own religious paradigms and mind-sets into their translation options ~ options which are inconsistent with (and alien to) the evidence of the Gathas. These examples are not by any means the only ones:

In *Part One: Does The Devil Exist?*

In *Part Three:*

Is Wisdom A 'God' Of Wrath, Enmity?

Ashavan & Dregvant;
The Absence Of Damnation & Hell In Other Avestan Texts;
Chinvat, The Bridge Of Discerning;
Apema, One Of Many Ends; and

In Part Six:

Yasna 30:3 and 4;
Yasna 43:12;
Yasna 44:16 (quoted as the 2d paragraph of the Kemna Mazda prayer).

¹⁹ Detailed in *Part One: Love*.

²⁰ Indeed, so well known was this idea of the necessity of mutual loving help for spiritual growth, that it survived destructive wars and persecution, and is expressed in the writings of the Pahlavi High Priest, Zadsparam; detailed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*. For how Zarathushtra's idea of the spiritual evolution of mortals fits his notion of the Divine, see *Part One: The Identity Of The Divine*; and in *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge Of Discerning*.