

### Seven Gems from the Later Texts.

Many years ago, I gave a little talk under this title. But here, I have changed some of the gems from that earlier talk. I hope you like these gems as much as I do.

These days, Zoroastrians often get into debates about the differences between the Gathas and the later texts. It is true that there are many differences. And it is true that various ideas and beliefs in some later texts are totally inconsistent with Zarathushtra's ideas in the Gathas. But sometimes, when reading the later texts, I come across some lovely things. I have already mentioned many such gems in other chapters. But here, I have collected seven of them, which you may like. A particular favorite of mine is the way the fire for a fire temple was made from so many different types and sources of fire ~ reflecting the sacred in all things. But that is discussed in some detail in 2 other chapters,<sup>1</sup> so I will not include it here.

#### *The First Gem:*

The first gem is in the *Dibacheh* of the *Afringan* ceremony. Now honesty requires me to tell you that I do not know, nor do I pray, the *Afringan*, or its *Dibacheh*. I came across this little gem in Jivanji Jamshedji Modi's book explaining religious ceremonies. Modi tells us that the *Dibacheh* is the first part of the *Afringan* ceremony, and literally means "Preface" (which I think is in Pahlavi). Modi says that according to this *Dibacheh*, when we pray, we don't pray just for ourselves. We pray for all the living. In this *Dibacheh*, the following words are recited:

"Pa ganj-i-Dadar Ahura Mazda rayomand khorehmand Ameshaspand beresad."<sup>2</sup>

According to Modi, with these words, we ask that our prayers go into the treasury ("ganj") of Wisdom, and His glorious attributes (amesha spenta), so that from this treasury, they may be distributed to all who need the benefit of our prayers. Thus the prayers of each worshipper spread an influence far and wide, to all the living. I rather like the idea of sending my prayers into Wisdom's treasury for distribution to those who need prayers. But even more, I have somehow become hooked by this idea of praying, not just for myself, but for all the living. I have found that it is impossible to hate someone if he is included in my prayers. So this little gem in the *Dibacheh* of the *Afringan*, even though I don't pray the *Afringan*, has been a healing influence in my life – encouraging generosity and dissolving hatred.

#### *The Second Gem:*

The next little gem appears in the YAv. *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*. It doesn't tug at the heart-strings the way the *Dibacheh* of the *Afringan* does, but it pleases the mind, because it sheds light on an important theological dispute. We all are familiar with the debate about the amesha spenta. Some of us argue that they are separate and distinct living beings (as depicted in many later texts). Others contend that they are Wisdom's divine characteristics, that He personifies these attributes (as depicted in the Gathas and some later texts). This issue is more than a little squabble. It goes to the very heart of Zarathushtra's teachings, because in the Gathas he puts forward the profound but simple idea that Wisdom's divine qualities, the path to Wisdom (*mazdā-*), and the reward for taking that path, are one and the same.<sup>3</sup> (Think about that for a minute!).

In the *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*, §§ 1 through 3 corroborate the idea that the amesha spenta are both a part of Wisdom's nature, and also His Word ~ the path of truth. In understanding these sections, it is helpful to bear in mind what Professor Thieme has said, that in a religion such as Zarathushtra's, which knows no images or idols, the name given to the deity is of decisive importance. It is the means of revealing the personality, the essence, of the deity.<sup>4</sup> A profound insight. In §§ 1 through 3 of the *Hormezd (Ormazd)*

*Yasht*, the author gives us his ideas through the technique of having Zarathushtra (purportedly) ask the Lord Wisdom questions, to which the Divine (purportedly) gives answers. Here are the questions and the answers:

" 'What ... Holy Word is the strongest? ... the most glorious?<sup>5</sup> ... the best healing? ... What destroys best the malice of Daevas and Men? ... What makes the material world best come to the fulfillment of its wishes? ... What frees the material world best from the anxieties of the heart?' Ahura Mazda answered: 'Our Name, O Spitama Zarathushtra! who are the Amesha-Spentas...' " Yt. 1:1 - 3, Darmesteter translation.<sup>6</sup>

If we study these words carefully, we see that the amesha spenta are described by the unknown author of this *Yasht*, not only as the Lord Wisdom's name, ~ a way of describing His nature ~ but also as His Word, the path to Wisdom, the path to the Divine ~ corroborating what we see so often in the *Gathas*.<sup>7</sup> And what are these qualities that are the nature of Wisdom, and also the path to Wisdom? They are the true most good order of existence (*aṣa- vahišta-*), its comprehension good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), its beneficial-sacred embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta- ārmaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu- xšaθra-*), comprising a beneficial-sacred way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*).

### *The Third Gem:*

The third gem appears in *Yasna* 60 ~ a later *YAv.* text ~ and it relates to the idea that I previously mentioned ~ that the qualities of the Divine (amesha spenta), the path to the Divine (amesha spenta), and the reward for taking that path (amesha spenta) are one and the same. If you carry this idea to its logical conclusion, it becomes clear that the objective of this path is a union with the Divine. Not everyone agrees with this understanding, so it was a source of some delight to me to see this idea expressed in the little gem that is *Yy60:12*. The later authors of the *Khordeh Avesta* prayers thought this section was so important that they quote it in the *Hoshbām* prayer. In understanding this gem, we need to recall that each quality of the Divine (amesha spenta) is an aspect of, or equated with, the true order of existence (*aṣa-*). Translated into English, this prayer says,

"Through the true order of existence (which is) most good,  
*aṣa vahišta*,<sup>8</sup>

through the true order of existence (which is) most beautiful,  
*aṣa sraēšta*

may we see Thee,  
*darəsāma θwā*

may we serve Thee,  
*pairi θwā jamyama*

May your following (be) the same with Thee.  
*haməm θwā hax ma* ♪ *Yy60:12*.<sup>9</sup>

Notice the three steps which are accomplished through the true order of existence which is most-good and most-beautiful:

First, '*may we see Thee*' that is, have a clear perception or understanding of the nature of the Divine (whose nature is the true order of existence (which is most-good, *aṣa- vahišta-*).

Second, '*may we serve Thee*' ~ the path to the Divine, worshipping the Divine with its own qualities (amesha spenta) ~ each of which is an aspect of the true order of existence (*aṣa-*), or equated with it.

And third, 'may your following be the same with Thee' ~ the end result of understanding, and following this path is attaining the true good order of existence (*aša*) completely, personifying it, which is the existence of the Divine.

#### *The Fourth Gem:*

The fourth gem is the "endless light(s)", a phrase for paradise that appears in some YAv. texts. A YAv. fragment called Yasht Fragment #22, explains that paradise occurs (metaphorical) in steps as follows:

"The first step ... placed him in the Good-Thought Paradise;  
The second step ... placed him in the Good-Word Paradise;  
The third step ... placed him in the Good-Deed Paradise;  
The fourth step ... placed him in the Endless Lights." Darmesteter translation.

The word that Darmesteter translates as 'Paradise' is *ahu- vahišta-* 'the most good existence', a state of being which in the Gathas and later texts is one of the terms used for paradise.<sup>10</sup> So more literally:

- ~ the first step places the soul in the most good existence (paradise) of good thinking;
- ~ the second step places it in the most good existence (paradise) of good word;
- ~ the third step places it in the most good existence (paradise) of good action; and
- ~ the fourth step places it in the endless lights (an enlightened state of being, paradise).

Sadly, today it has become fashionable amongst some Zoroastrians to deride the maxim, 'good thoughts, good words, good actions'. But this maxim is at the very core and foundation of Zarathushtra's teachings. In fact, this maxim encapsulates the concept of embodying, personifying, the true, good order of existence (*aša-*) ~ which is most good (*vahišta-*) ~ with each beneficial-sacred thought, word, and action ~ *spənta-ārmaiti-* ~ attributes of the Divine. And if you read the steps to paradise in this Younger Avestan Fragment, you will see that good thoughts, good words and good deeds, are not only the steps to paradise, they in fact are paradise itself ~ an existence that is the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness. Each time you think a good thought, speak a good word, and do a good deed, you create a little bit of the divine here on earth. You create a little bit of paradise (however temporarily).

And don't you love the last description of 'heaven' in this Avestan Fragment? 'Endless lights.' A lovely term for paradise. It shows that the unknown author of this Yasht understood Zarathushtra's use of metaphor.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra uses light (in its various forms) as a metaphor for truth, *aša-* ~ factual truths, and the truths of mind/heart/spirit. So the more truth-filled a person becomes, the more light filled s/he becomes. Now if you put this idea together with Zarathushtra's idea that heaven is a state of being that personifies the true order of existence ~ you begin to appreciate the beauty of the description of paradise as endless lights, ~ a state in which souls have become pure light (pure goodness, pure truth), in an endless (undying, non-mortal) existence.

And in the later Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, the Divine is called 'endless light'.<sup>11</sup> What does that tell us about Zarathushtra's idea of 'paradise' ?

#### *The Fifth Gem:*

This gem is a particular favorite of mine. It is the practice of the *hamazor* gesture, which originally was a gesture of greeting and friendship. Man is a social animal. We need small, concrete (material) things, to inspire us, to remind us of more abstract ideas.

The custom of the *hamazor* gesture was so important in ancient times that (like so many things that were valued) it was incorporated in many religious ceremonies, like the *jashan*.<sup>12</sup> But according to Jivanji Modi, in times past ~ even as late as his own times in India ~ it was still practiced by secular members of the community as a greeting of friendship ~ when they attended religious functions, and also on good secular occasions such as New Year's day.<sup>13</sup> He acknowledged however (writing in 1922) that "This custom of making Hamazor with others is getting a little out of practice in Bombay, but is still in practice in the Parsee towns of Gujerat."<sup>14</sup> So this secular *hamazor* gesture fell into disuse as a secular greeting, but remained in the rituals.

The *hamazor* gesture involves two people who greet each other by interlacing their hands. In other words, each person (in turn) both holds the other person's hands and is held by the other person's hands. Do you see what this implies? It implies a friendly equality, a mutual caring. Neither person has a controlling or upper hand over the other.

In Iran after the Arab invasion, and in India (at least through the times when I lived there, till 1956), the social environment was an authoritarian one, a fact that subtly influenced the mind-set of Zoroastrians who were minorities in both these social environments. And Modi recounts that in India, the *hamazor* gesture was performed in an hierarchical way ~ both during certain religious ceremonies and in community gatherings.<sup>15</sup> But the form of the gesture itself demonstrates that the ancient creator(s) of this gesture intended it to reflect a friendly, egalitarian way of relating to each other ~ not a social or religious hierarchy. This is in accord with Zarathushtra's teachings in which even the relationship between the Divine and man is not hierarchal. It is that of a friend to a friend, or a beloved to a beloved. Indeed, in searching for the Divine, Zarathushtra discovered the family of all the living.<sup>16</sup>

When this *hamazor* gesture is performed, the two persons say to each other *hamazor hama asho béd*. According to my friend, Dr. Kersey Antia, High Priest of the Chicago Zoroastrian Association, this phrase (freely translated) means: "May we be one with each other, one with truth (*aša-*)".<sup>17</sup> This *hamazor* gesture and its accompanying words reminds us that we are part of one existence, one whole, one union, so we should be friends with each other. And one thing more. We should be in union with truth ~ factual truths and the truths of mind/heart/spirit (*aša-*).

A union with each other, a union with truth.

Would we be benefited by resurrecting this ancient gesture of friendship with each other and with truth ~ perhaps at the start of community events, perhaps at the same time as when the priests perform the gesture during a ritual? I think we would. But that is for you to decide. And what should we say, when we perform the gesture? I value and love the ancient phrase *hamazor, hama asho béd*. But I also recognize that realistically, most people would not understand the meaning of these ancient words. It is pointless to engage in a gesture if we do not understand its meaning. Perhaps we need to find a short translation of *hamazor, hama asho béd* in the everyday language of the people who might wish to use this gesture ~ a translation which above all conveys the priority of friendship and truth ~ even though the translation might not be literally exact. In this way, we can revitalize this ancient custom in a meaningful way.

### *The Sixth Gem.*

This gem is a rather lovely YAv. blessing. It would be a great blessing to give at the end of *jashans* or other small ceremonies that are performed in people's houses. The translation is mine. And I have added implied words (in round parentheses) only in accordance with well established Avestan usage. Regarding the last word(s) of this blessing, there are manuscript differences that are scribal errors, as many translators have

explained. I give you the version which I think best fits the context. But a discussion of the linguistics of this blessing (including the scribal errors) is detailed in another chapter.<sup>18</sup>

Here is the blessing.

'In this house  
may listening overcome not-listening  
peace (overcome) strife;  
generosity (overcome) stinginess,  
embodied truth (overcome) disregard (for it);  
the straight-spoken word (overcome) the false-spoken word.  
Through truth, (may) untruth (be overcome).'  
Yy60:5, my translation.

*vainīṭ ahmi nmāne sraoṣō asrušm*  
*āx štiš anāx šm*  
*rāitiš arāim*  
*ārmaitiš tarōmaitm*  
*aršux dō vāx š miṭaox tēm vācim*  
*aša drujəm*  
Yy60:5

Geldner 1P p. 210 (line divisions are mine)

If you look at the coupled opposites, the 'good' ones start with 'listening' ~ a word which in the Gathas is used for both 'hearing and implementing' the Word of Wisdom,<sup>19</sup> and which here (in my view) is used with double entendre ~ listening to each other as well. Then various acts of implementing this Word follow ~ peace, generosity, embodied truth, the straight-spoken word.

And then comes the conclusion ~ that through the true order of existence, *aša* (a wholly good order of existence which encompasses all that is good), untruth (which encompasses all that is false, wrong, bad) is overcome ~ reflecting Zarathushtra's idea of "... deliver[ing] deceit [*druj-*] into the hands of truth [*aša-*]" Y30:8, Y44:14, Insler 1975.<sup>20</sup> To my mind, that all encompassing conclusion makes a fitting end for the preceding components of hearing and implementing the Word of Wisdom ~ the path of truth (*aša-*). It is an important component of Zarathushtra's teaching, and it ties into the next gem.

### *The Seventh Gem.*

This gem is from the *Zamyad Yasht*. It complements the YAv. blessing, which is the *Sixth Gem*. This Seventh Gem is an affirmation ~ reflecting a key, foundational, element of Zarathushtra's thought ~ that eventually, truth will prevail, and untruth will be defeated ~ in all the living.<sup>21</sup> An affirmation which is also echoed in the YAv. term *frašō.karaiti-*, (Pahlavi *frashgard/frashkard*) which has its genesis in the Gathas.<sup>22</sup> This quotation from the *Zamyad Yasht* is simple. And (once we understand its implications) it is beautiful. I have combined the last 2 lines of § 95 and the first 4 lines of § 96 for this seventh gem. Like many YAv. texts, strands of Zarathushtra's thought are mixed in with ideas that are not found in the Gathas. Here, I give you only those strands that reflect Zarathushtra's thought. But I have footnoted an explanation of the omissions, indicated by a string of dots.

'Through truth, he will overcome the untruth of evils, of the bad-seeds which (consist) of darkness'.<sup>23</sup>  
*vanāṭ aša akəm drujim yəm dušciθrəm təmaṇhaēnīm ∴ Zamyad Yasht, Yt.19:95.*

'Bad thinking indeed, is overcome,  
 Good thinking overcomes it;  
 The false-spoken word is overcome,  
 The straight-spoken word overcomes it ... " Yt. 19:96, my translation.

*vanaiti<sup>24</sup> akəmcit manō  
 vohu manō taṭ vanaiti<sup>22</sup> ∴  
 vanaiti<sup>22</sup> miθaox tō [vāx š] .....<sup>25</sup>  
 arəžux dō vāx š təm vanaiti ∴ ...<sup>26</sup> ∴  
 Zamyad Yasht, Yt.19:96,  
 Geldner 2P p. 258.*

Not impressed? Well, let us consider it.

In § 95, the composer identifies the nature of 'untruth (*drujim*)' as consisting of evils, (*akəm*). He uses 'of the bad-seeds (*dušciθrəm*)' as a metaphor for the evil genesis of untruth ~ origins which consist of 'darkness (*təmaṇhaēnīm*)' ~ also a metaphor. 'Darkness' here stands for the inability to see the light (a metaphor for truth). It stands for the many types of ignorance, the lack of understanding (which we all have), which generates the untruth of falsehood, wrongdoing. An unenlightened state of being. Ideas that we find in the Gathas;<sup>27</sup> (although we should recall that physical 'darkness' in and of itself is not 'bad' or 'inferior'. In Yasna 44 Zarathushtra asks the Divine many (rhetorical) questions about the physical existence, one of which is "... Which craftsman [sg.] created the luminous bodies and the dark spaces ..." Y44:5 Insler 1975. Notice, one craftsman created both the sun, moon and stars (*luminous bodies*) and the *dark spaces* between them. We should be careful not to read into Zarathushtra's system of metaphors, our own human prejudices).

Returning to our seventh gem, in the line which starts this quotation (from Yt. 11:95), 'he' (a part of the 3p verb form which equally could be 'she' or 'it' depending on the context),<sup>28</sup> refers to the previously mentioned Astvat Ereta ~ the name of one of the millennial saoshyants or 'saviors' (sometimes translated as 'messiahs').

In the Gathas there are no millennial saviors. There is no one person, (or two, or three) who will come and make everything all right. Zarathushtra tells us that each person who translates the teachings of Wisdom into words and actions, is a saoshyant, a savior.<sup>29</sup> So each one of us has to make things right ~ be a 'savior' ~ in 1,001 ways, small and large, through our good choices in thought, word and action.

In this quotation from the *Zamyad Yasht*, we see Zarathushtra's unique teaching that good will eventually prevail, and evil will be defeated (paradoxically, *because* of the freedom to choose). But here, there is something even more important ~ how untruth is overcome. We see a clear understanding in this YAv. text of what Zarathushtra repeatedly says in the Gathas ~ that untruth is overcome by truth, that what is evil is overcome by what is good ~ a formula that also is contained in the YAv. Blessing that is the *Sixth Gem*.

In today's mind-set, 'truth' and 'untruth' bring to mind what is factually correct or false. So at first thought, these statements in §§ 95 and 96 may seem trite, obvious. Of course, the way to overcome untruth is with truth. So what's the big deal?

Well, the application of this statement to our lives and to Zarathushtra's envisionment is not quite so obvious, or one-dimensional. 'Truth' ~ the true order of existence (*aša-*) ~ includes more than factual truths. In the Gathas, it includes the truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ all that is good, right. It includes such concepts

as acquiring knowledge, being beneficial, using reason, honesty, friendship, generosity, lovingkindness, solicitude, compassion, justice (as in being fair), not harming, not injuring, et cetera. And in the Gathas, the opposite of truth ~ *druj*- ~ is all that is ignorant, false, wrong, bad, harmful, injuring, rage-filled, hate-filled, unreasoning, violent, cruel (not just cruel actions but also cruel words), etc.<sup>30</sup>

So the conclusion that 'untruth [*druj*-]' is overcome by 'truth [*aša*-]' means that we cannot overcome wrongdoing, by doing wrong ourselves. We cannot overcome hatred by hating. We cannot overcome injustice by revenge; we cannot respond to actions that harm us, by harming, injuring, destroying. If we do, we only create more 'untruth [*druj*-]'. For good to prevail, we have to break this repeated tit for tat cycle of wrongdoing. We can only overcome untruth by each one of us eliminating our own wrongful preferences (within ourselves) and (incrementally) becoming, personifying, the true order of existence ~ the nature of which is a way of being that is most good (*aša- vahišta*-), most reasoning (*aš.x ratu*-), most beneficial (*spənta-/spəništa*-), ~ which, in Zarathushtra's thought is the essence of the sacred.<sup>31</sup> And when each unit of existence has done so, completely, existence will be perfected ~ individually and collectively.<sup>32</sup>

So this way of defeating untruth (with truth, with our good thoughts, words and actions) ties into, not only the ways in which we live our own lives, it also ties into Zarathushtra's perception of the Divine,<sup>33</sup> and the redemption of existence as a whole. Salvation, redemption, in Zarathushtra's thought is being saved from untruth. Salvation is truth, its comprehension, its beneficial-sacred embodiment in thought, word and action, its good rule, the beneficial-sacred way of being ~ qualities which make a being divine (*amesha spenta*).<sup>34</sup>

Zarathushtra's perception of the nature of the Divine is so very different from that of many dominant religions through whose mind-sets and paradigms the Gathas and later texts have been translated.

The perception of Wisdom (*mazdā*-), as a deity who is separate and apart from his creation, and is vengeful, wrathful, who punishes in hell of torture, is alien to Zarathushtra's thought as expressed in the Gathas,<sup>35</sup> and as affirmed in so many YAv. texts.<sup>36</sup>

### Conclusion:

The ideas revealed by these gems go far beyond what is normally and generally taught as 'Zoroastrianism'. Yet we find these ideas throughout the Gathas, and the later texts, expressed in many different ways. It may sometimes seem that I keep repeating myself ~ over and over. But for these ideas to be credible, I have to show you the evidence on which they are based ~ evidence which is expressed throughout the Gathas, and often throughout the later texts ~ in kaleidoscopic ways. The patterns which are formed with each turn of the kaleidoscope are quite different. Yet their components are the same. In the same way, Zarathushtra (and many later texts), express many different patterns of thought. But the components of these patterns (the *amesha spenta*) are the same ~ the 7 qualities that comprise the Divine, the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path (There! I've said it again!).

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<sup>1</sup> See *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*; and also *Part One: Five Ancient Customs*.

<sup>2</sup> Jivanji J. Modi (1922), *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, (1986 Reprint) p. 359.

<sup>3</sup> See *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*.

<sup>4</sup> Thieme, *Reflections on the Vocabulary of Zarathushtra's Gathas*, in *Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium, 1993* (WZO, 1998), p. 201. Thieme's statement that the religion of Zarathushtra knows no images or idols is corroborated (after a fashion) by Herodotus who mentions that the ancient Persians "have no images of the gods, no temples, nor altars, and consider the use of them a sign of folly..." Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, as translated by George Rawlinson

(Random House 1942), p. 73. Moulton 1912 expressed a similar view, stating, "Genuine Parsism was, indeed, without images to the last." (p. 67). Sadly, this lasted only through the Achaemenian period. The Sasanians did indeed have images of the Divine, as evidenced in *Part Three: Evolution of the Name(s) Mazda, Ahura*; and *Part Four: The Parthians & Sasanians*.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the phrase, "... the most glorious [*x'arənanjuhastəməm*]..." Yt1:1, (Av. word in square brackets is from Geldner 2P p. 60), in YAv. texts, the *x'arənah-* is the divine glory within all things. See *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*; and in *Part Three: Xvarenah*.

<sup>6</sup> SBE 23, pp. 23 – 24. Darmesteter calls this Yasht *Ormazd Yasht*, whereas Geldner, based on his compilation of mss. calls it *Hormezd Yasht*. Both names are the Pahlavi for Avestan *ahura- mazdā-*. You may wish to be aware that although the Yashts are in YAv. their titles are in Pahlavi, because during Pahlavi times, when these YAv. Yashts were recited as part of the ritual, they were identified by their Pahlavi titles.

<sup>7</sup> See in *Part Two: A Question of Reward & the Path*, and *The Puzzle of Worship*.

<sup>8</sup> The Avestan words of this prayer have been transliterated by me from the Avestan script in Geldner 1P p. 211. You may have noticed that in this YAv. prayer, the instr. case 'through truth' is *aša*, whereas in GAv. the instr. case is *ašā* (with a long final *ā*). This is because the long final vowels of Old Av. are usually shortened in YAv, representing an evolution of the language down through the centuries.

<sup>9</sup> My translation. A discussion of the linguistics of this section (Yy60:12) as well as the translations of Taraporewala 1951 and Humbach 1991 are footnoted for comparative purposes in *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*.

<sup>10</sup> SBE 23, p. 317. I do not have access to the Avestan text of this Fragment which does not appear (under that designation) in Geldner. But my friend Farrokh Vajifdar was kind enough to consult Westergaard (whose compilation of Avestan texts does include this Fragment). The Avestan term which Darmesteter translates as 'paradise' is (shown here in stem form) *ahu- vahišta-* '(the) most-good existence'. The same steps to paradise are set forth in the Pazand *Mainyo-i-Khard*, as translated by E. W. West (APA Oriental Reprint), and in that Pazand text, paradise appears as *vahesht* (from Av. *vahišta-* 'most good') which later became the Persian *behesht*, which is the Persian word for 'paradise' or 'heaven' ~ but by then it had become a place, not a state of being (as in the Gathas). So Darmesteter's interpretive translation 'Paradise' is corroborated by the Pazand text, and also by the teachings of the Gathas, in that the paradise of good thoughts, words and actions are indicia of a state of being that personifies a wholly good order of existence (*aša-*) and its component parts ~ which is the 'most-good existence' *ahu- vahišta-*.

<sup>11</sup> By the time of the Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, a belief in Cosmic Dualism (two uncreated spirits) had become established ~ a belief we do not find in the Gathas. Speaking of the most-good spirit, the *Bundahishn* says:

"... for the supreme is that which they call endless light ..." *Bundahishn*, Ch. 1, § 5, E. W. West translation, SBE 5, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> According to Modi, the hamazor gesture is also performed at the end of the following rituals:

"1. Yajashne. 2. The Vendidad. 3. The Visparad. 4. The Afringan. 5. The recital of the Nyaishees jointly by a number of persons forming a congregation." Modi, 1922 *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, p. 379.

<sup>13</sup> With regard to the secular use of the hamazor gesture on New Year's day, he states that "Members of a family or friends, if at variance, are expected to forget their differences on the New Year's day and to unite and be friendly with the performance of the Hamazor." Modi 1922 p. 382.

<sup>14</sup> Modi 1922 p. 379.

<sup>15</sup> Modi describes a hierarchical way of performing the hamazor custom in religious ceremonies, where the 2d priest was the one who went around and performed the hamazor gesture with other priests and with the members of the congregation (Modi, *ibid.* pp. 379 - 380, 382) ~ presumably the senior priest was thought to be too important to do so. He also states "In such religious and ceremonial gatherings, people generally take their stand according to their



seniority or superiority." *ibid.* p. 380. A far cry from the mind-set of equality and independence reflected in the Gathas ~ in which neither arrogance of 'superiority' nor servility have any part.

Describing the way the hamazor custom was performed by secular members of the community on New Year's days in 19th to early 20th century India, Modi says (in part),

"Early in the morning of that day, after washing and putting on new apparel, the male members of the family exchange this form of salutation ..." *ibid.* p. 382.

Clearly, the Zoroastrians in India at that time had forgotten the mind-set of ancient Zoroastrians who practiced a very real gender equality in Iran from Zarathushtra's time, to before and during early Achaemenian times (detailed *Part One: Gender Equality*).

<sup>16</sup> See *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*.

<sup>17</sup> According to Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index, the Av. word *hama-* means 'same' (an adj.). In the Gathas, it appears in inflected form (as *hamām* nom. sg. ntr.), in a verse in which Zarathushtra equates the House of Good Thinking (one of his names for paradise) with *vahišta-* 'most-good' ~ the superlative degree of *vohu-* 'good'. Speaking of corrupt, tyrannical priests he says,

"... They shall not be brought to the House of Good Thinking,  
This is equal to [*hamām* literally '(the) same as'] the best indeed [*vahištācī*] ..." Y32:15 - 16 Insler 1975.

Modi also thinks that *hama* in the word 'hamazor' means 'same'. But (with respect) I cannot agree with Modi's explanation of 'zor' which he says "is Avesta Zaothra and comes from the root *Zu* to perform a ceremony." p. 381. His opinion would, by definition, limit the hamazor to a priestly function, which is contradicted by his own statements that historically it also was performed by secular members of the community on secular good occasions. But I agree with him when he says that the joining of hands signifies unity, harmony with each other, and also that the participants unite in the works of righteousness. p. 383. I agree, but I think the author of the hamazor intended to express a union ~ a union with each other, a union with truth, which (if we think about it, is Zarathushtra's notion of paradise ~ a collective completeness, a divine union).

<sup>18</sup> A brief explanation of the meaning and grammatical value of each word in this blessing is footnoted in the last chapter in *Part One: A YAv. Blessing*.

<sup>19</sup> See *Part Three: Seraosha*.

<sup>20</sup> Insler 1975 translates *druj-* words as deceit. But 'deceit' is only a part of the meaning of *druj-*. I therefore follow Taraporewala in translating it as 'untruth' ~ all as discussed in more detail, with evidence, in a ft. in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

<sup>21</sup> Discussed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*; and *A Question of Power*.

<sup>22</sup> Detailed in the following chapters in *Part Three: Heaven In Other Avestan Texts*; and *Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*.

<sup>23</sup> The syntax and translation of the last sentence in § 95 is difficult. Hintze translates this sentence a bit differently, and I give you her translation for comparative purposes.

*vanāt aša akəm drujiṃ yəm dušciθrəm təmaṇhaēnīm ::*

**Hintze 1994 translation:** "He (Astvat.ereta) will overcome by Truth the wicked Falsehood of evil origin, which consists of darkness". p. 40.

In Av. an adj. has to be in the same case/number/gender as the noun it describes. So (with respect) I do not think that *akəm* (which is gen. pl.) can belong with *drujiṃ* (which is acc. sg.) to give us 'wicked Falsehood'. This is not nit-picking. The differences in translation change the meaning in subtle ways (in my view).

**My translation:** 'Through truth [*aša*], he will overcome [*vanāt*] the untruth [*drujiṃ*] of evils [*akəm*], of the bad-seeds [*dušciθrəm*] which [*yəm*] (consist) of darkness [*təmaṇhaēnīm*}'. Yt.19:95.

The word *druj-* is often translated as 'the Lie, falsehood, deceit'. But in the Gathas, *druj* is used as the opposite of *aša-* 'the true (correct) good order of existence ~ indicating that (*druj-*) means more than just 'Falsehood'. Based on the ways in which it is used (contextual use), its meaning includes all that is 'evil', wrong ~ all the untruths of mind/heart/spirit. Therefore (following Taraporewala) I think that 'untruth' is a more accurate translation of *druj-* in meaning (although linguistically, the Av. equivalent of untruth would have a different word structure). And here (as in a Gatha verse) darkness is a metaphor. In other words, untruth is an unenlightened state of being, the genesis (seeds) of which are 'darkness' in the sense of lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, lack of being able to 'see' the nature of the true good order of existence.

<sup>24</sup> Geldner has *vanaiti* in lines 1, 2, 3 and 4 of § 96, showing no mss. variations;

Hintze has *vanaite* in lines 1 and 3, but not in lines 2 and 4. Her English translation does not give her footnotes, so I cannot give you her explanation. But I am persuaded by what she thinks is the correct forms of the verb in lines 1 and 3, which has to be different from the verb form in lines 2 and 4. In the contexts of lines 1 through 4, the verb forms simply cannot be the same in all lines.

<sup>25</sup> This string of dots is in Geldner. He explains that 2 mss. have a 3/4 inch space, and a 1/4 inch space here respectively (which to me indicates that the scribe copying this text wanted to show that something was missing ~ perhaps due to holes in the ms. from which was being copied). And other mss. show two different words. The word I have inserted in square brackets '[*vāx š*]' appears in Hintze 1994, which she footnotes, but unfortunately her English translation does not give her footnotes. So I do not know the basis for her selection. However, it is close enough to the sense (and word choice) of Yy60:5 (the Sixth Gem, quoted in the main part of this chapter) I therefore think *vāx š* here is a choice that fits contextually.

<sup>26</sup> Lines 5 through 8 of Yt.19:96 predict that 'completeness' and 'non-deathness' will overcome hunger and thirst. Ignore the different colors when you first read the next 4 lines.

*vanāt haurvāśca amərətāśca* 'completeness and non-deathness (will overcome)'

*va šuḍəmca taršnamca* 'both hunger and thirst'

*vanāt haurvāśca amərətāśca* 'completeness and non-deathness (will overcome)'

*ayəm šuḍəmca taršnamca* •• 'evil hunger and thirst'

In the later texts, the material metaphor for completeness (*haurvatāt-*) is water; the material metaphor for non-deathness (*amərətāt-*) is plants. I do not know whether during the time when this YAv. text was composed, the metaphoric nature of waters and plants (where so used) was understood, but the association of completeness with waters, and non-deathness with plants, was undoubtedly known. And it is possible that some teachers of the religion wanted to make these associations meaningful to people in the context of their lives, (in an age when there was no social safety net to keep people from dying from hunger or thirst, brought about by drought which was deemed a great 'evil'). So such teachers may have taught that:

~ the 'evil' of hunger would be overcome by plants (*amərətāt-* 'non-deathness'), and

~ the 'evil' of thirst would be overcome by water (*haurvatāt-* 'completeness').

But we can tell that the composer of (this part of) the *Zamyad Yasht*, no longer understood even which material thing was linked with which concept, because he inverts their order. If he had understood their linkage he would have linked 'thirst' to *haurvāśca* (waters), and 'hunger' to *amərətāśca* (plants). In the above quotation he did not. Nevertheless, he cared enough to transmit such knowledge as he had heard from others, and expressed it as best he could ~ even though he may not have understood the significance of the imagery. And for that I respect and value him. Each piece of transmitted knowledge has value, and has something to tell us (even when imperfect).

<sup>27</sup> On *dušciθraṃ* 'of bad-seeds' In the Gathas, referring to the deities of his culture and their worshippers (described elsewhere in the Gathas as cruel, violent, full of rage, hatred, inflicting bondage and tyranny), Zarathushtra says,

"... all of you are the offspring [*ciθraṃ* 'seed'] stemming from evil thinking [*akāt manañhō*], deceit and [*drujasca*] disrespect ..." Y32:3, Insler 1975.

So in Zarathushtra's mind, did the deities of his culture spring from the bad thinking of their followers? .

<sup>28</sup> In Avestan, verbs are not gender specific, and the form of the verb indicates whether the subject of the verb is sg. or pl. and 1st person ('I, we'), 2p ('you'), or 3p ('he, she, it, they').

<sup>29</sup> See *Part One: A Question of Salvation*.

<sup>30</sup> Detailed in a ft. in *Part Two: The Houses Of Paradise & Hell*.

<sup>31</sup> Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*, where I detail the evidence, that in Zarathushtra's thought, the true order is most good (*aša- vahišta-*) and is equated with being 'beneficial/most-beneficial' (*spənta- spəništa-*).

<sup>32</sup> *Part One: Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*, lays out the evidence which shows that in Zarathushtra's thought, completeness, spiritual perfection (*haurvatāt-*) is reached individually and collectively.

<sup>33</sup> This aspect of the nature of Wisdom who is Lord (*mazdā- ahura-*) is discussed in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*, and in *Part Three: Is Wisdom A 'God' of Wrath, Enmity?*

<sup>34</sup> Detailed in *Part One: A Question of Salvation*.

<sup>35</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

<sup>36</sup> Detailed in *Part Three: The Absence of Damnation & Hell in Later Avestan Texts*; and *Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*.