

# **THE GATHAS, OUR GUIDE**

*the thought-provoking  
divine songs of Zarathushtra*

**translated  
by**

**Ali A. Jafarey**

**USHTA PUBLICATION**

First Edition: June 1989

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Published by:       Ushta Inc.  
                          P.O. Box 2160  
                          Cypress, CA 90630-

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***yoi zarzdâo añhen Mazdâi***

**To those who are devoted to the Wise One.**  
(Song 4.1)

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## Preface

The 26th Karachi Sea Scouts Troop, first of its kind in the Indian subcontinent, was established in 1937. It drew its members from various high schools of the city of Karachi, now in Pakistan. The original core consisted of twelve specially chosen Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, and Sikh Boy Scouts. I was one of them. It was led by two British and one Indian officer. The troop had a beautiful harmonious brotherhood. We used to meet at a then vacant point on China Creek, inside Karachi harbor, for swimming and boating and at another point on West Wharf, further out, for sailing.

By the end of the year, our number swelled to sixteen. Although of heterogeneous cultures, we soon became very friendly. However, there happened to be a zealous missionary among the newcomers. He would argue with others on religious matters, even with the Hindus of other denominations. And on one fine summer morning, well before the class began, he took the Parsis by surprise by picking at the Zarathushtrian religion. When I realized that they were not prepared to defend themselves, I, prompted by my Iranian zeal, went forward. I hardly knew anything about *Good Conscience*, the good religion of Zarathushtra, except what I had heard from my parents about old Iran and its religion, and that in the past all our ancestors were Zarathushtrians. My mother used to recite and simplify stories from the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi. Incidentally, in those days my hometown Kerman, Iran, was the second city with the largest pocket of Iranian Zarathushtrians, and both my parents had Zarathushtrian friends. My father used to frequent a famous Dorabji's business office in Bazaar-e Vakil in Kerman and talk with the Parsis there. It seems that I put up a good defense, especially in favor of reverence to fire, because my Parsi colleagues appreciated it.

On the following Sunday, Eruch P. Bulsara, one of the Parsis, gave me a copy of the *Gathas* as a token of his appreciation. It had the text in Devanagiri script, and was translated by the late Jotindramohan Chatterji in Sanskrit, English, and Gujarati. I was simply fascinated, rather captivated by the sublime songs. I wanted to learn the language. Eruch introduced me to the late Dr. Maneck B. Pithawalla, the then Principle of B.V.S. Parsi High School. He taught me Avesta, Pahlavi, and fundamentals of the religion, and then gladly encouraged me to hold an Avesta-Pahlavi class at the school with a dozen of Parsi boys and girls of my own age. He also introduced me to Dasturji Dr. Maneckji N. Dhalla, the enlightened and broadminded sage of a scholar, for further studies. The entire period taken by the two teachers exceeded six years. I feel heavily indebted to Eruch and my two teachers for their guidance to the *Gathas*.

Dasturji affectionately advised me on the very first day I faced him, more or less, in these words: “When you think you have learned enough of the Avesta language, do not start with translating the *Gathas* first. They are the guide. A wrong interpretation would mislead the people. Engage yourself first with other parts of the Avesta. Wait for five years before you embark on translating the *Gathas*.” I made him a promise.

Although the *Gathas* have become my only thought-provoking guide during the last fifty years, I have never forgotten my promise to the sage. My *Gatha* translation in Persian was published in 1981—over forty years from the day I made the promise, and seven times the time proposed by my teacher. This English rendering began as monthly lessons of the *Gatha* classes held at the California Zoroastrian Center, Westminster since October 1986. It is a revised edition of my Persian translation, “**Stot Yasn**, *gâthâ-ye asho zartosht-e espantamân, va sorudhâ-ye vâbaste be-ân, bâ gozâresh-e fârsi-ye ravân,*” (**Staota Yesnya**, the *Gathas* of Zarathushtra Spitama and the songs supplemented to them, with the text and commentary in fluent Persian), Tehran, Iran, 1981. It, therefore, includes the texts and translations of all the Avestan pieces in the *Gathic* dialect. This constitutes what the Sassanian collection put in their foremost *nask* (one of the twenty-one volumes of the canonized scriptures), and called it *Stot Yasn* (Avestan *Staota Yesnya*, reverential praises). And, above all, I am pleased and proud too that after the *nask*'s apparent loss, rather submergence in the extant *Yasna*, I am the first to put it back in a independent print, first in Persian and now in English.

The promise, always lingering in my mind, has made me to think that a good, standard translation of the *Gathas* can only be presented by a team of experts, both Zarathushtrian scholars who regard them as their holiest of the holies and non-Zarathushtrian academicians of *Gathic* and relevant studies. I proposed it at the Second World Zoroastrian Congress, held in Bombay in 1964. I read a paper at the Third Congress, also held in Bombay in 1977. I have talked about it to many a listening ears and nodding heads. But to this day, I have not seen a single step taken by any Zarathushtrian organization toward it. Meanwhile, various scholars, each on his or her own, are coming forward with their renderings in English, French, German, Gujarati, Persian, and other tongues. There is no doubt that these renderings differ from one another. It makes the reader a little confused, and robs him or her of some of his or her faith in the words meant to inspire one to soaring heights of enlightenment. But, let me make it clear that this is always the case with individual translations, be it the renderings of a religious scripture or a poetic work. Even the much standardized Bible has its different versions.

I have, like many other translators, consoled myself by consulting other translations also to come to a better conclusion. I have had the translations, commentaries, and notes by B. T. Anklesaria, Mobed Firuz Azargoshasb (Persian), Ch. Bartholomae, F. A. Bode and P. Nanavutty, J. Chatterji, J. Duschesn-Guilleman, K. S. Guthrie, S. Insler, K. E. Kanga (Gujarati), D. J. Irani,

A. F. Khabardar, L. Mills, Ebrahim Pour-e Davoud (Persian), Kh. E. Punegar, Abbas Shoustari-Mehrin (Persian), I. J. S. Taraporewalla, and the Pahlavi translation and its Sanskrit rendering. To each of these persons (living or not) and works I express my deep gratitude.

My own method has been to track, trace, find, and weigh all Gathic words, terms and ideas—some controversial—in the extant Avestan and Pahlavi writings to understand their true meanings and values. I have kept in view the relevant Vedic literature, the rich Persian literature, and the richer Iranian lore. I have made every possible use of my linguistic, prosodic, and anthropological abilities for the task. I have consulted the renderings of the Gathas by the above-mentioned authors. And above all, the *Gathas* have been my *guiding guru* in life for the last half a century. I have refrained from interpretation. If not based upon solid evidence but made from imaginative deductions, interpretation can be very misleading. I have, as far as possible, confined myself to brief explanations and that too outside the text.

Above all, I have kept in mind the traditional Iranian, rather Aryan poetic patterns, especially in Persian with its *do-beitis*, *rubââs*, *ghazals*, etc. Hemistich is the smallest unit of sense in Indo-Iranian poetry and when coupled with the following hemistich, the sense of a sentence is complete. A stanza is always like a pearl, an independent valuable, but when strung in a cord along with other pearls, it becomes a part of a greater valuable, and if a number of cords are joined in a necklace, all of them, retaining their independent value, become an integrated part of a precious ornament. The Gathic lines, each a partial sense, make complete sense in a stanza with a message of its own. Stanzas join in to compose a song on a specific subject. Several songs, making a *Gâthâ*, deliver a more complete message. Finally, seventeen songs in five *Gâthâs*, a complete necklace, a coherent text, give us the master message of Zarathushtra. Most of the translators, particularly Western scholars, have missed this peculiarity, so vital to understand the Indo-Iranian prosody.

Furthermore, every Indo-Iranian poet uses his own or a chosen poetic name in his poems and often addresses himself in third person singular, a style understood by any person with an Indo-Iranian background. But this very style has prompted many Western scholars of the Gathas think that those stanzas or the songs in which Zarathushtra's name occurs were composed by another person. I have changed such stanzas from third person to first person and have placed a (#) mark at the end of the stanza to show that the original is in third person. Also the poet sometimes talks in singular in a stanza or poem, and then suddenly changes to plural. The context, in such cases, reveals whether the poet means singular or plural number. The Gathas have the same style. The context, however, shows that although the request is made by Zarathushtra alone, he has his companions included in the divine guidance requested.

Another point is the usual habit of an Indo-Iranian poet of personifying the most important subject or subjects of his poem with the sole purpose of



emphasizing the point, a fact that may best be compared with close-ups in a film. This again is understood by the common listener or reader. However, strengthened by the animistic and deifying trends of the later Avestan authors, it too has provided a chance for many a scholar to construct a pantheon of deities out of the Gathic abstractions. Hardly anyone has ever seriously considered that members of a pantheon must have a myth backing and projecting them. None of the Gathic abstractions, later turned into *amesha spentas* and *yazatas*, has a myth to support its deification, animation, or even personification. I have capitalized Gathic abstracts when they are personified because of their importance, otherwise not.

The translation, in an easy reading with a poetic touch, is as accurate as my understanding goes and the consultations with other translations have helped. It forms the core of the book, a straight reading. It may be recited as a prayer, taken as a guide to an ever-better life, or studied and understood as a philosophy. The gist, sometimes with an explanation, at the end of the songs in Appendix I helps to make it more understandable. Appendix II explains the Gathic abstractions so as to make it clear what really righteousness, good mind, dominion, serenity and other terms mean. The Gathas are by right an independent entity and were so in the *Stot Yasn nask* of the Sassanians and were definitely in their original form during the Avestan period. I have numbered the songs as they stand and have departed from the conventional practice of specifying them by their Yasna numbers. Yet to help some of the readers, I have given the Yasna equivalents in Appendix III. Moreover, traditionally each song is known by the first two or more words with which the song begins. In addition to the traditional names, I have given my own title to each of the songs to project the main subject of the discourse. All these points represent the Gathas as a coherent parts of a single body, the thought-provoking message of Asho Zarathushtra.

The text in the Gathic dialect on the opposite pages of the larger edition is for those who, like me, derive a divine pleasure by reciting the songs in their original form. It has, in addition to the Gathas, the supplements in the Gathic dialect. They consist of the *Haptañhâiti*, the Seven-Chapters, the *Yeñhe Hâtâm*, a formula honoring men and women, the *Fshusho Mânthra*, the Prospering Thought-provoker, the *Hadhaokhta* in praise of Inspiration, and the *Fravarti*, the "Choice of Religion" formula of Initiation. It has two more appendixes to provide the reader with Zarathushtra's life sketch and an introduction to the Avesta.

Nevertheless, I firmly believe in a collective rendering of the sublime songs by a team of competent scholars as the ultimate object and a standard edition. I hope that day will dawn. But, until such a day, I hereby present my comprehension of the thought-provoking songs of Zarathushtra to those who wish to listen to his divine message in English. I find them spiritually inspiring, mentally awakening, bodily invigorating, physically refreshing, and practically guiding. I am confident, the reader will find the same.

In conclusion, I am greatly grateful to my wife Amy and a circle of loving friends—men and women, young and old, dead and alive, teachers and pupils—for being with me in understanding the Gathas for the past five decades. I especially thank my friend William H. Brawner for having read the entire script and for giving valuable advice and critical remarks that have improved the text.

Ali A. Jafarey  
Buena Park, California  
February 7, 1988  
18 Bahman month, 3725 Religious Era.

# The Gathas, Our Guide, an Introduction

## A Small Book

The Gathas! It is a small book, a booklet of barely 60 pages of 4.5X7.5 inches (11X18 cms). It has 241 stanzas in all, a total of less than 6,000 words, enough to read them all within an hour. Its seventeen songs, strangely called *hâitis*, sections instead of songs, were composed by Asho Zarathushtra Spitama.

The size is perfect, a guide-book size. Its size was calculated by Asho Zarathushtra himself. He wanted to deliver an ever-fresh message. It had to be concise and precise. A bulk of verbosity of “do’s” and “don’ts” would not have worked. He himself says that he has given us his message “in a poetic and not a none-poetic” language, “so that it shall always stay with” us (Song 9.17). A poetic piece is easily and correctly memorized and transmitted. Chances of interpolation, especially if the poetry has a halo of high holiness around it, grow very slim. This was an Aryan devise of preserving their heritage at a time when there were no devices for writing and recording. The Gathas are living only because of living memories, devout human tape-recorders. The unique technique has preserved the very dialect spoken by Asho Zarathushtra and his companions for us. The size, as already stated, is perfect—concise, precise, invoking, thought-provoking.

Its logical sequence is: Ahuna Vairya, the emblematic opening stanza of the Gathas, as the first, followed by the songs from one to seventeen, and concluded by the benedictory A Airyema Ishya. Ashem Vohu could have come at the very beginning as the “motto” of righteousness, or , as was the case with Pahlavi writers, at the very end as a sublime colophon. This makes the Gathas a coherent collection. Each stanza is, as already said, a pearl in a cord of song, and each cord of song is a part of a necklace of the *divan*, complete poetic works. This is what Zarathushtra wanted to leave for his present and the future—a thought-provoking message. All other talks, sayings and statements said by him in prose or even poetry on the daily life of four thousand years ago belonged to his time and are naturally lost. What is left as an eternal message is his coherent Gathas.

## Preservation and Transmission of the Gathas

The survival of the Gathas to the present day is the outcome of a sad story which, nevertheless, has a happy ending. By the time the Sassanian dynasty

gained the *Kayanian* crown in Persia in 224 CE the language of Zarathushtra and companions had become an “unknown, mysterious” language. The Gathas became incorporated in a group of writings now known as the *Avesta* which became regarded as sacred scriptures in its own right. It was only through translations, interpretations, and commentaries in the Pahlavi language of the Sassanian days that the knowledge of the Avesta, including the Gathas, could be gained.

The downfall of the Sassanian Empire in 630 CE and the subsequent eclipse of the Zarathushtrian Religion brought hard times down upon the faithful. The collection of sacred writings was badly damaged and only one-third of the Avesta, mostly consisting of its religious part, survived more or less as a result of the catastrophe. Fortunately, the Gathas survived intact through this extremely hard time because of the valiant efforts of priests who protected them (and the rest of the Avesta) in form of a salvage. The present position is, therefore, of a salvage order put by persons who did not know the precise setting. They did their best and one should be grateful for what they did under very adverse conditions.

Contacts between the Zarathushtrians in Iran and India during the 15th to 18th centuries CE, followed by the rising tide of Western scholarly interest in Oriental studies, eventually saved the day for us and restored the words of Ašo Zarathushtra to the faithful. The recovery of the Gathas is fairly recent. Most of what we know about the Gathas has been, more or less, uncovered during the past one hundred years. And we owe much of it to the patient Western scholars who gave it an impetus. The slogan of “Back to the Gathas” by some reformists is even more recent.

This, however, does not mean that the unconscious indifference to the Gathas is very old. As already stated, it is the sad outcome of the downfall of the Sassanian empire and the worsening plight of the Zarathushtrians in a hostile environment. We may put it between the 10th and 18th century, less than 800 years.

The Pahlavi books, particularly *Denkard* and *Vichitakiha-i Zadsparam*, hold the Gathas (now pronounced *Gâsân* and *Gâhân*) and its complete nask of *Stod Yasn* as the direct divine revealed words of God to Zarathushtra. It consisted of the Gathas and a number of supplements by Zarathushtra’s close companions. Although it is doubtful if the authors of the Persian *Rivayat* (Zarathushtrian responsa literature written between the 15th to 17th century CE) knew what it was and what it meant, they too hold *Stod Yasn* in high esteem. Pahlavi and Persian translations of Yasna, Vispered, Vendidad, and other parts of the extant and extinct Avesta have survived, and we find the Gathas well translated and explained among them.

## The Gathas in the Avesta

It is the Avesta which vividly shows the position of the Gathas. It is the highest there. The “Salutation” to the beginning of the Gathas, by an unknown Avestan poet, calls the thoughts, words, deeds of Asho Zarathushtra as “ideal,” calls upon the ever-living savants to promulgate them, and pays the homage with a bow (Song1.0). They are the only prescribed prayers in the rituals. Nirangistan and Vispered are explicit on this point. They and other parts of the Avesta specify only the Gathas and Haptañhâiti, collectively called *Staota Yesnya*, meaning “Reverential Praises,” by their names—song by song with certain verses recommended to be recited more than once. The Avesta knows no other prayers by names except those in the Gathic dialect—the Gathas and Haptanhaiti from Ashem Vohu, Ahuna Vairya, seven songs of the Gathas, and A Airyema Ishya to Yenghe Hatam, Hadhaokhta (Sarosh Hadokht: Yasna 56), Fshusho Manthra (Yasna 58), and Fravarti (Yasna 11.17-13.4). They constituted the *Stot Nask* of the Sassanian sacred literature. The five Gathas in the Avesta are the very divinely inspired words of Asho Zarathushtra, the holiest of the holies. Yasna 55 is a befitting lengthy praise in honor of the Gathas. It says that they “are the Primal Principles of Life. ... They are, as Lord Wise wishes, meant to maintain an ever-fresh and modern life. ... The Gathas are our guardians and protectors. They are food for our minds, rather, food and clothing for our souls.”

## A Challenge to Consider

The statement made by the composer of Yasna 55 is very challenging. He or she made it some 3500 years ago. But is it and can it be still true? Why not have a quick glimpse through the Gathas?

The Gathas are basically *mâñthras*, literally thought-provokers. This is the reason why they are so concise and precise. They stimulate one’s thinking faculty and guide it on to the track to think precisely. They stir one to move on a clear, straight road with a basic map in hand and a discerning vision in mind. The Gathas, to point out but some of the salient points, with some of the relative references, teach that:

1. There is only one God, God of Subtle Wisdom, Ahura Mazda, creator, sustainer, and promoter of cosmos (Songs 8 and 9).

2. All superstitious beliefs in false gods, goddesses and similar imaginary beings, and in the performance of rituals to appease them should be abandoned and all irrational ideas and practices should be given up (Song 5).

3. The religion of Good Conscience, the Gathic name for the Zarathushtrian religion, is universal and for all (Songs 9.10 and 17.1).

4. The divine enlightenment (*seraosha*) reveals many divine faculties which lead to the understanding of the principles that form the cosmos, an orderly universe. The most important are *spenta mainyu*, progressive mentality, the divine faculty that creates, maintains, and promotes; *asha*, righteousness, the universal law that precisely regulates every move in the cosmos; *vohu manah*, the wisdom behind every righteous move; *vohu khshathra*, good rule and the benevolent power that keeps good order in the universe; *âramaiti*, serenity and tranquility acquired under a good rule and required to promote the cosmos; *haurvatât*, wholeness achieved under tranquil conditions; and *amaretât*, eternity attained through wholeness. (These abstract principles form the main points of most of the seventeen songs.)

5. The universe has been created good and is orderly progressing towards completion as intended by its Creator, Ahura Mazda (Songs 8 and 9).

6. Mankind has been endowed with the freedom of thought, word and deed, and has a bright mind to discern between what is good and what is bad for human society (Songs 3.2, 4.9,11,12).

7. Human being has two mentalities—*spenta mainyu*, progressive mentality, and *angra mainyu*, retarding mentality. The progressive mentality helps him to improve himself and the world around him. The retarding mentality harms him and the world. The wise would, therefore, choose and promote the better mentality (Songs 3,4,10).

8. The human world on this earth is divided into two camps—the righteous and the wrongful. The objective of the righteous should be to win over the wrongful into the righteous camp and thus establish a good life for all (Songs 3,4,10, and many more references).

9. What is good can best be understood by studying nature, advancing knowledge, harmonizing with all that is good and beneficial, and promoting the environment—our human society and the rest of the living world (Songs 7.3, 8.6, 9.12,13, 15.3).

10. Mankind may, if it chooses, develop all the above divine faculties and become creative, in fact the renovator, maintainer and promoter of its endowed environment, and become spiritually perfect and eternally godlike (Songs 4.16, 8.3, 9.9, 13.3).

11. If a person does not choose correctly, his world continues to be chaotic, and he suffers the consequences until he adopts these divine principles (Songs 8.5, 17.6,8,9).

12. Sooner or later humanity will correct itself and attain wholeness and eternal life (Song 10.7).

13. Caste, color, race, and nationality do not play any discriminatory part in the universal message of Zarathushtra at all (no references found).

14. Mankind is its own savior. Each person, guided by a discerning “good mind” and “good conscience,” should work for the betterment of self and fellow human beings and living the world (Songs 3 & 10).

15. Men and women are equal and enjoy the same rights in a free and responsible society. Superiority lies in righteous deeds alone (Gatha songs 3.2, 17.5, A Airyema Ishya, and Haptanhaiti songs 1.6, 5.3).

16. The smallest unit of the humanity society is the family and the largest unit the entire human world. All the units—home, town, state, country, and world—should be united and bound together by love and wisdom (Songs 4.16,18, 5.1, 6.3,4).

17. Every person should acquire and promote wisdom. Human society should be an intellectual society consisting of selfless, devoted members (Songs 3.1, 4.6,17,19, 7.10).

18. Free human society should select only fully-qualified persons of righteous records and merits for both temporal and spiritual offices in a true democratic environment, and thus establish the cherished and chosen ruling system (Yatha Ahu, Songs 2 &16).

19. The prime object of every person should be to make a better world in spirit and body. Human society must progress. Every member must persevere to promote it. Modernization of thoughts, words and deeds should be the order of the day (Songs 3.9, 7.5, 11.9, 13.11).

20. Enlightenment and happiness come to the person who gives happiness to others without discrimination whatsoever. An enlightened and happy life is what every person needs to achieve and spread (Song 8.1).

21. Prayers help a person to communicate with God. They are invigorating, guiding, and satisfying. They help to experience the divine love. One may pray whenever, wherever, and in whatever state one feels the urge to communicate with God. One may do it alone or in the company of others. Prayers may be said in silent meditation, in a few words, in long lines, in prose or poetry, recited loud and sweetly. They may be said plainly or with simple rituals that would help the person feel elevated in their experience (This is repeated throughout the Gathas).

To summarize, the Gathas are prayers to God and guidance for humanity. Every line, every stanza, and every song is communion with God; and at the

same time, they impart an eternally modern message. They lead humanity, with all its modern science, to Ahura Mazda, God of Subtle Wisdom. With the Gathas as the guide in thought, word, and deed, one may devote one's life in practicing, teaching and preaching the divine doctrine. Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds are the quintessence of the Gathas.

Should we keep in mind that the above points are not a designed selection from a miscellany or an encyclopedia by numerous authors of different ages and divergent schools, but from a booklet by a single composer, we will realize the uniformity, universality, modernity, and the subtlety of the thought-provoking message.

## **No Interference**

But the Gathas never indulge in details of what one must do and must not do in a society. The Gathas do not interfere into the details of one's daily life. They do not make life cumbersome by breathing down one's neck. They do not prescribe what to eat and what to reject, what to wear and what to tear, what to build and what to wreck, when to work and when to retire, when to celebrate and when to mourn, what is disease and what the cure, and what observances for the dead and how to dispose the corpse... Had they done so, this very act would have rendered the Gathas obsolete within a short period. The divinely enlightened Zarathushtra knew well that society and civilization do not remain long unchanged. They are continuously changing with the passing time. Social differences are evident from time to time and place to place. Any instruction on daily life would grow old, or be out of place in another location, and if it becomes a tradition to be adhered to, it would only prove an obstruction in a changing and progressing world. That does not mean that the Gathas advocate abandoning or discarding any good, logical and useful tradition. In fact, they favor maintaining and promoting a rich and enriching heritage (Song 9.2). What they disown is obsolete, retarding, useless, dumb, unintelligible, and superstitious customs.

A universal message cannot force the traditions of one society upon another's. A universal message ought to be above regional and temporal differences. And that is what the Gathas are. With the Gathas as the guide, one need not try, generally in vain, to stop the clock and transfer a mode of living to another land, only to maintain an out-moded, out-of-place practice. With the Gathas as the guide, one need not cut, clip, patch, piece and paste, or alter, change, transform, transmute and modify any custom just to adapt to, what one may call, an alien environment. It is the Gathic society, ever-fresh, ever-modern, ever-logical, ever-scientific, and ever-divine, which prevails. One does not need an adaptation with the Gathas as the guide.



## Back to the Gathas?

Back to the Gathas? Sounds an attractive slogan, but no! The Gathas are not the past to go back to them. The Gathas are the guide and as such, they are the present and the future. The slogan or motto, if any, should be: “Forward with the Gathas!”

What, therefore, is needed is neither revision nor modification nor reformation, but restoration. We must resort to the Gathas, so far unconsciously kept high above reach, in order to restore ourselves to the Good Conscience, the true Zarathushtrian religion. The restoration of pure and pristine Gathic principles of life in every wake of life—both mental and physical—would automatically mean modernization, rather a continuous modernizing process. It shall keep us always abreast of time, abreast with a foresight.

Let us, therefore, read later all the 21 points projected in this introduction and still later many more from the Gathas themselves to fully comprehend and realize that we have the true guidelines for an up-to-date mental and physical, spiritual and material life on this good earth and beyond. “May we learn, understand, comprehend, practice, teach, and preach” the inspiring message of the divinely inspired *Mâñthran*, the thought-provoking Teacher, because according to Yasna 55, the Gathas, Our Guide are “the Primal Principles of Life ... (and) we wish to maintain our lives fresh as is the will (of God Wise).”

Salutation  
By  
**An Unknown Avestan Poet**

Ideal are the thoughts, ideal the words, ideal the deeds of the Rightful Zarathushtra. Let the ever-living promulgators present the Gathas. Homage to the rightful Gathas!

Note: This introductory salutation was, most probably, composed by an early reciter of the Gathas and a devout promulgator of their teachings. It has been faithfully preserved by those who followed this teacher and gave it a high position.

**The  
GATHAS**  
-  
**The Thought-provoking  
Divine Songs**  
  
**of**  
  
**Zarathushtra Spitama**

***Ashen Vohu,***  
***The Main Motto***

Righteousness is the best good. It is radiant happiness. Radiant happiness comes to the person to whom righteousness is for the sake of the best righteousness alone.

Note: Righteousness is the universal law that stands for order, evolution, progress and perfection as ordained by the Creator for the creation. One becomes righteous by doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right place, and with the right means to obtain the right result. It means precision in every thought, word, and deed. It means constant improvement and continuous renovation. It brings enlightenment, true radiating happiness, provided that this happiness is shared by others. It then becomes righteousness for the sake of the best righteousness. The couplet, frequently repeated in prayers, is popularly known by the name of *Ashem Vohu*, the two words in the beginning of the Avestan text.

**Ahunavaiti Gâthâ**  
Key stanza – Ahuna Vairya

**Ahuna Vairya**  
***The Principle Of Choice***

Both the lord and the leader are to be chosen because of their righteousness. These two appointments are made with good mind, so that the acts of life are done for the Wise One, and the dominion of God is well established, in which the chosen person becomes the Rehabilitator of the rightful who are oppressed.

Note: *Ahuna Vairya*, or as commonly called by the two words in the beginning, *Yathâ Ahu*, is the Principle of Choice. As explained in the Avesta (Yasna 19), it is the Zarathushtrian master formula for a spiritual and material democratic system in which one is free to choose a person as his or her lord and leader. A lord is a person who is able to free the world from mental and physical evils, and the leader is a person who can lead the world to truth, precision, progress, wholeness, and immortality. The only criterion for the choice of a such person is his or her precise righteous record of service. The choice for the appointments is based on good mind, sound judgement, and discretion. Such a righteous selection leads the people to work for God alone—an act that establishes the Divine Dominion and order on earth, chosen and established by the people themselves. It is the order in which the chosen lord and leader rehabilitate all those who are wrongfully oppressed and deprived of their rights. According to the Avesta, Zarathushtra was chosen by the wise as the prime lord, leader, and rehabilitator of the world.(see note on Song II for further details on page ...)

**Ahunavaiti Gâthâ**  
Song 1 - *ahyâyâsâ*

**Song 1:**  
***Humbly I Pray***

1. Mazda, Wise God, with a bow and uplifted arms, I pray. First, I ask for support through progressive mentality. Then I pray that I may perform all my actions, based as they are on the wisdom of good mind, precisely according to the laws of righteousness so that I please You and the soul of the Living World.

2. Wise God, I approach You through good mind. Grant me through righteousness the blessings of both existences, the material and the mental, so that I lead my companions to happiness.

3. O Righteousness and Good Mind, I shall sing you praises none has sung before. I shall likewise praise the Wise God and those for whom Serenity promotes the unconquerable dominion. Respond to my calls for help.

4. I, who am attuning my soul to Good Mind, know that the actions done for the Wise God have their rewards. As long as I continue to have the will and the power, I shall teach others to strive after Righteousness.

5. Having realized Good Mind, when shall I see you, O Righteousness? When shall I find the path to the Most Powerful God, and listen to the voice of the Wise One. With these greatest thought-provoking words, we shall convince the barbarians to choose the right.

6. Come through good mind, and grant a long life through righteousness. O Wise Lord, through Your sublime words, give me, Zarathushtra and my men strong support, so that we may overcome the spite of the hateful. (#)

7. Grant, O Righteousness, those rewards which are the gifts of Good Mind. And you, Serenity, grant Vishtaspa his wish and mine too. O Wise One, grant the power through which we shall successfully proclaim Your thought-provoking message.

8. With love, I pray to You, the Best Lord, Who is in harmony with the best righteousness. Grant the best of good mind for ever to noble Ferashaoshtra and to me and all those who are worthy of it.

9. Lord, may we not anger You, Righteousness and the Best Mind by abusing these gifts. We are united in offering You our praises, for we consider You, the mighty masters of promotion, to be most worthy of invocation.

10. Wise God, fulfill the desire of those whom You know to be just and earnest in righteousness and good mind to attain rewards. For I know, loving songs for a worthy purpose never go unanswered by You.

11. I have always observed the principles of righteousness and good mind. Wise God, teach me to speak the thoughts of Your mind, and the words of Your mouth: the teachings through which the pristine life shall be established.

## **Ahunavaiti Gâthâ**

Song 2 -*khshmaibyâ geush urvâ*

### **Song 2: The Choice Of Asho Zarathushtra As The Lord And Leader Of The World**

1. The Soul of the Living World lamented to You: Why did You create me? Who fashioned me this way? I am oppressed by fury, rapine, outrage, and aggression. I have no one to rehabilitate me other than You. Lead me to true civilization.

2. Then the Creator of the Living World asked Righteousness: Who is Your leader of the World, who can offer her civilization, nourishment, and strength? Whom do you wish to be her lord; one who shall repel the fury of the wrongful?

3. Righteousness replied: There is no authority in the world who is free from malice. Of those yonder, I know none who would activate the noble to help the meek. Had there been one person strong enough among them, I would have hurried to his call.

4. The Wise God knows best what the divines and their people have been doing in the past and shall do in the future. God alone is the judge. Let it be so as He wishes us to be.

5. It is better for us two, the Soul of the fruitful World and me, to raise our hands for the divine grace and ask the Wise One: Will there be no livelihood for the honest? Will there be no reformer among the wrongful?

6. The Wise God, the Knowing, spoke in a loving form: So you do not know any lord or leader who acts in righteousness. But, were you not fashioned by the Creator to look after the promoter as well as the settler?

7. The Wise God, of one accord with Righteousness, prepared His thought-provoking message in response to the sweet plea made by the World, because with His doctrine, He is the promoter for those who wish to be protected. He asked: Good Mind, do you know any person who can help the mortals?

8. Yes I do. There is only one person who has listened to our teachings. He is Zarathushtra Spitama. Wise One, he is prepared to proclaim the message through his Songs for the sake of Righteousness. Grant him sweetness of speech.



9. The Soul of the World cried again: Am I to accept a powerless man with a feeble voice as my caretaker? I want a powerful ruler. Will such a time come when he will give me his helping hand?

10. Grant him and his people, God, strength and power through righteousness and good mind, so that he leads me to peace and tranquility. I also, Wise One, recognize him as Your foremost discovery.

11. When shall Righteousness, Good Mind, and the Divine Dominion hasten to me? Wise One, do acknowledge, with Your discernment, the order of the Great Fellowship. God, help us now. We look to Your kindness.

**Song 3:**  
***Good And Evil***

1. Now I shall speak to those who wish to hear of the two principles, which are of importance even to the wise. I shall also, with reverence for good mind and the good consideration of righteousness, have praises for the Lord, so that you may see brilliant happiness.

2. Hear the best with your ears and ponder with a bright mind. Then each man and woman, for his or her self, select either of the two. Awaken to this Doctrine of ours before the Great Event of Choice ushers in.

3. Now, the two foremost mentalities, known to be imaginary twins, are the better and the bad in thoughts, words, and deeds. Of these the beneficent choose correctly, but not so the maleficent.

4. Now, when the two mentalities first got together, they created “life” and “not-living.” Until the end of existence, the worst mind shall be for the wrongful, and the best mind shall be for the righteous.

5. Of these two mentalities, the wrongful mentality chose worst actions, and the most progressive mentality, as steadfast as rock, chose righteousness. Therefore, those who would please the Wise God, may do so by choosing true actions.

6. Between these two, the seekers of false gods did not decide correctly, because delusion came to them in their deliberations. Therefore, they chose the worst mind, rushed in wrath, and afflicted the human existence.

7. But to the person who chooses correctly, comes endurance of body and steadfast serenity through strength, good mind, and righteousness. Of all these, such a person shall be Yours, because he has come fully out of the fiery test.

8. And when the sinners undergo their punishment, then, O Wise One, the dominion will be realized for them through good mind. God, then they shall be taught how to deliver the wrong into the hands of righteousness.

9. And may we be among those who make this life fresh! You, lords of wisdom, who bring happiness through righteousness, come, let us be single-minded in the realm of inner intellect.

10. Then, indeed, the power of wrong shall be shattered. Then those who strive with good name shall immediately be united in the good abode of good mind and righteousness of the Wise One.

11. If you understand the two principles of prosperity and adversity established by the Wise One, which are a long suffering for the wrongful and a lasting good for the righteous; you shall, then, enjoy radiant happiness.

**Ahunavaiti Gâthâ**  
Song 4 - *tâ ve urvâta*

**Song 4:**  
**Guidance**

1. Keeping the two principles of Yours in mind, we shall teach the hitherto unheard words to those who destroy the righteous world by their wrongful doctrines. No doubt, the two principles will prove the best for those who are devoted to the Wise One.

2. Since it is not easy for the soul to find the better course, I, whom the Wise Lord knows, come to you all as the leader of the two parties, so that we may all live in accordance with righteousness

3. The happiness You grant, has been promised to the two parties through Your mental fire and righteousness. It is a matter of principle for the discerning. O Wise One, for our knowledge, speak with the very words of Your mouth. It will help me guide all the living to choose aright.

4. When righteousness is to be invoked, may the wise lords be with reward and serenity. I seek through my best mind the powerful dominion for my people, so that we can overcome wrong by promoting it.

5. Speak to me so that I can discern what has been made better with righteousness, and know and realize through good mind what has been granted to me as a seer. Also, Wise God, the things that will and will not happen.

6. The best shall come to the wise person who will propagate my true thought-provoking message. It leads to righteousness for wholeness and immortality. Thus the dominion of the Wise One will, through good mind, increase for him.

7. He, Who thought first that the lights emanate with bliss, is, through His wisdom, the creator of righteousness, which holds the best mind. Wise Lord, stimulate my mind through Your creative mentality, because so far it has remained the same.

8. Wise One, I realized You as the first and the last, and the patron of good mind, when I grasped You in my vision as the true creator of righteousness and the Lord of life's actions.

9. I also realized, Wise Lord, that serenity is Yours, and O Creator of the Living World, that wisdom of mind is Yours, which has given the world the choice to go either to a settled person, or to the one who is not.

10. Of the two, it has chosen the prospering settler and the promoter of good mind as its righteous lord. O Wise One, the deceitful nomad has not shared in this good tradition.

11. O Wise One, at the beginning, You, through Your mind, fashioned for us the living world, conceptions and intellects, put life in the physical frame, and gave deeds and words, so that one makes his choice through free will.

12. Therefore, whether one speaks truth or not, whether one is wise or otherwise, one expresses in words what is in one's heart and mind. Accordingly, one enjoying serenity, may ask himself: Where will the two mentalities lead?

13. O Wise One, whether inquiries are made in open or in secret, or a person of small offense suffers a very grave consequence, You watch all these with Your sharp eyes through righteousness.

14. God, I ask You this: What is happening and what will happen? What holds in future as compensation for the righteous, and Wise One, what for the wrongful? How do they stand when their performance is complete?

15. God, I ask You this: What is the punishment for him who promotes the rule of the wrongful with evil actions, and for him who has no other work in life than to commit crime against the cattle and the men of a harmless settler?

16. I ask this: How does a munificent person, who strives for promoting the power of house, district, or land with righteousness, becomes, Wise Lord, like You, and by what deeds?

17. Which of the two courses is greater, the one the righteous person chooses for himself, or the one the wrongful takes? Let the wise one tell the knowing, so that the ignorant does not continue his work with deception. Wise Lord, be the revealer of good mind to us.

18. Therefore, let none of you listen to the messages and teachings of the wrongful, because he brings danger and destruction to the house, settlement, district, and land. Therefore, correct him with weapons.

19. Lord, one who listens and realizes the truth, becomes a life-healing wise person. He controls his tongue to express the right words when he wills. He, O Wise One, through Your radiant light, proves good to both parties.

20. Whoever goes over to the righteous, enjoys a bright future. But the wrongful lives a long life of darkness, evil splendor and woeful words, because it is on account of his deeds, that his conscience leads him to it.

21. God Wise grants wholeness, immortality, abundance of righteousness, independence in dominion, and a lasting good mind to him, who is His friend in mind and action.

22. These principles are clear to the beneficent person, who works for the realization of good mind and dominion, and serves righteousness with his words and actions. Such a man, Wise Lord, is the most helpful person.

## Ahunavaiti Gâthâ

Song 5 - *akhyâ-câ khvaetush*

### **Song 5: Aberration**

1. O false gods beware, the family, the community, and the fellowship, all pray to the Wise God for bliss in the manner I do, and say: May we be Your messengers to control those who are Your antagonists.

2. The Wise God, an ally through good mind and a good friend through the glorious righteousness, has responded to them: “We have chosen the good and progressive serenity for you.” (And they say:) “May it be ours!”

3. But you deceptive gods, and those who vehemently venerate you, are the creations of evil mind, wrong, and disdain. You are notorious for your deceitful deeds in the inhabited part of the Earth.

4. Because you have, with your actions, made the mortals do the worst, only to be called as *daeva*-devotees, who give up good mind, and run away from the Wise God’s intelligence and from righteousness.

5. Thus you have deprived mankind of good life and immortality. But in fact, you, who are but deceptive gods, have deceived yourselves with your evil mentality, deed, and speech by providing the wrongful with power.

6. However, even if this power makes a criminal attain fame, You, Wise Lord, remember well the fact that in Your dominion and under righteousness, Your doctrine will prevail.

7. Regarding these crimes, no wise person has ever attained power which could be called life, a life, said to be achieved by the force of clamoring metal. Of such, You, Wise Lord, know best the consequences.

8. Regarding these crimes, it is said that Yima son of Vivañhan also sounded himself the god of our world. For such a crime too, as far as I am concerned, the final judgement lies with You.

9. The evil teacher destroys with his teachings the doctrine of the wisdom of life. He prevents people from the precious acquisition of good mind. I appeal to You, Wise Lord, and to Righteousness, expressing my mind in words.

10. Indeed, he destroys the doctrine who considers it the worst to look at the world and the sun with plain eyes, who sets the just against the wrongful, who destroys settlements, and who hurls a deadly weapon at the righteous.

11. Also they destroy life who highly regard the wrongful as lords and ladies, rob people of their property, and try hard to distract the righteous from their best mind.

12. It is through such teachings that they try to distract mortals from excellent deeds. For them, the Wise One has decreed ill consequences, because they destroy worldly life in luxury. It is for this reason that seizing priests have chosen the wrong dominion of the wealthy instead of righteousness.

13. It is because of such power that the destroyers of this life wish to gain their spoils in the house of worst mind. And they, Wise Lord, who, in their lust, growl about the message of Your thought-provoker, their lust, in turn, prevents them from seeing righteousness.

14. For seizing such spoils, even the sagacious princes have long been devoting their minds and efforts. They have, thus, resorted to help the wrongful. Fired by the wisdom-wasting drink, they have declared that the world must be destroyed.

15. It is with such actions that the ritualistic priests and princes are annihilated through the very people, whom they have deprived of the power to live as they wish. Of these two parties, the latter will be taken to the house of good mind.

16. All the teachings of the talented are the best to listen to. Wise Lord, I am powerful enough to meet the two-fold threats, and restrain the crime of the wrongful directed against friends.



**Song 6:**  
***Devotion To Duty***

1. According to the Primal Laws of Life, the leader shall do full justice to the wrongful and to the righteous, as well as to the person whose falsity is combined with his probity.

2. And whoever foils the wrongful by word, thought, or action, or if approached by a visitor, teaches him good things, advances in his convictions to the satisfaction of the Wise God.

3. Whoever is very good to the righteous, whether a relative, or a member of the community, or, O Lord, a member of the fellowship, or serves the living world with zeal, lives indeed in the domain of righteousness and good mind.

4. Wise One, I am one who venerates away inconsideration and evil mind from You; perverse-mind from the family; related wrong from the community; revile from the community; and extremely evil counseling from the world settlements.

5. I shall listen to Your Inspiring Voice, the greatest of all voices, to reach my final goal: a long life in the dominion of good mind, and a straight walk along the paths of righteousness to the serene abode of the Wise God.

6. I am the true invoker who, through righteousness, perceives You with the best mind. It is with such mental satisfaction that I wish to work as an adviser for the settled people. Therefore, Wise Lord, I am longing to have Your vision and communion.

7. Come to me, O Best One, O Wise One, in person and in sight through righteousness and good mind so that I am heard beyond the Fellowship. Let our reverential offerings be clearly manifested among us.

8. See for Yourself my intentions which I am pursuing through good mind. They are, Wise One, reverence and praising words for You through righteousness. Grant me the steadfastness of immortality and the substantiality of wholeness.

9. Wise One, it is Your intention that these two promoters of righteousness be the refreshing splendid goals achieved through the best mind. The growth of these two associates make souls harmonize.

10. Wise One, make all those enjoying a good life, who have been, who are, and who shall be, share Your pleasure. Promote our physical enlightenment through good mind, dominion, and righteousness.

11. Most powerful Wise God, Serenity, world-promoting Righteousness, Good Mind, and Dominion, listen to me, be gracious to me for whatever rewards You grant.

12. Lord Wise, rise within me, grant me courage through serenity, good gifts of prayers through the most progressive mentality, full vigor through righteousness, and felicity through good mind.

13. To support me, Wide-watching Lord, reveal to me the force of Your sovereignty, the blessings of good mind. Show me through progressive serenity, righteous conceptions.

14. Now as a dedication, I, Zarathushtra offer to the Wise One the very life-breath of myself and the first fruits of my good mind, deeds and words, gained through righteousness, with my ear to the divine voice; in fact, my whole strength. (#)

**Ahunavaiti Gâthâ**  
Song 7 - *yâ shyaothanâ*

**Song 7:  
Renovation**

1. The deed, the word, and the veneration by which I give immortality, righteousness, and the motive for wholeness to the people, are very much offered by us, Wise Lord, to You.

2. Moreover, all these offerings are made to You alone through thoughts of good mind and actions of a progressive man, whose soul is in accord with righteousness. Wise One, he goes singing everywhere songs of glory and praise for You.

3. Therefore, we make a humble offering to You and to Righteousness. The living beings in Your dominion are those who promote good mind. Indeed, it is in the rise of a beneficent person, Wise One, that there lies gain for all those belonging to You.

4. Therefore, Lord, we yearn for Your fire, which is strong through righteousness. It is very swift and forceful, and clearly and strongly helps the supporters. But, Wise One, for an enemy daring to harm, it has the power of arms to stop him.

5. What is Your dominion, what is Your power, Wise One, for us to follow in action through righteousness and good mind in order to protect the oppressed person of Yours? For You, we have renounced all the false gods and the barbarian people.

6. If indeed, You are so, Wise One, through righteousness and good mind, then grant me guidance through all the goals of this life, so that I happily return to You with veneration and praise.

7. Wise One, where are Your devotees who comprehend good mind, and despite retrogression and failure, attend to inherited doctrines with wisdom? I have none besides You. Therefore, protect me and my people through righteousness.

8. Indeed, they are afraid of our actions just as a weakling is afraid of a stalwart, because these actions constitute a danger to many. Wise One, those who are antagonistic to Your principle, do not think of righteousness, and are at a distance from good mind.

9. Wise One, he who forsakes progressive serenity, esteemed by the wise, with his evil deeds solely because of the lack of good mind, avoids them much on account of their righteousness, just as the disheveled barbarians keep far from them.

10. The person of good intellect says that the deeds of good mind must be maintained. He knows that progressive serenity is the true product of righteousness. All these, God, are means of promotion in Your dominion.

11. Both wholeness and immortality lead to Your splendor. The sovereignty of good mind and serenity with righteousness promote steadfast strength and courage. These, Wise One, constitute our strength against antagonists.

12. What is Your guidance and what is Your wish? Is it for praise, or is it for veneration? Wise One, declare it while we listen, and the reward for following Your guidance. Show us, through righteousness, the paths to self-reliance of good mind.

13. God, this is the same road of good mind You have shown me. It is the religion of the benefactors by which good deeds lead only through righteousness to happiness, the promised reward for the beneficent, a reward, Wise One, solely given by You.

14. Indeed, Wise One, this reward is given to those, who, in their choice of physical life, truly serve the community of the fruitful world with their deeds of good mind, and God, promote Your plan of wisdom through communal righteousness.

15. And in response to my request in praises, Wise One, tell me now the best words and deeds through good mind. Make life truly renovated with Your sovereignty as You wish.

**Ushtavaiti Gâthâ**  
Song 8 - *ushtâ ahmâi*

**Song 8:**  
***Realizing—Self, Nature, God***

1. May the Wise, Ruling-at-will God grant radiant happiness to the person who radiates happiness to any other person at large. I pray for steadfast strength and courage in order to uphold righteousness. Grant me through serenity the blessings of a rich life of good mind.

2. Moreover, may the best of blessings come to the person who gives blessings to others. Wise One, may his knowledge grow throughout the days of his long life of joy, through Your most progressive mentality, the wondrous wisdom of good mind which You created by means of righteousness.

3. And may that person get much good who teaches us the straight paths of progress. May he, in his physical and mental life, truly attain the existence where God dwells, for, Wise One, he is like You; sincere, noble, and progressive.

4. Wise One, I realize You to be powerful and progressive because You help with Your own hand. You give rewards to both the wrongful and the righteous by means of the warmth of Your fire which is mighty through righteousness, and through which strength of good mind comes to me.

5. I realized You, God Wise, to be progressive when I saw You at the birth of life, and found that You have ordained that actions and words should have consequences: bad for the bad, and good for the good. It shall be so through Your excellence until the final turn of the creation.

6. At that turn, in which I exist, You, Wise One, come with Your progressive mind, dominion, and good mind, through the actions of which the living worlds are promoted by righteousness. Serenity explains to them the proper laws of Your intelligence which none can deceive.

7. I realized You, God Wise, to be progressive when I was encircled by it (enlightenment) through good mind, and it asked: “Who are you? To whom do you belong? How would you, in these days of questioning, explain the directives to the living and to yourself?”

8. Then I said to it first: “I am Zarathushtra. I am, as far as I can be, a true opponent of the wrongful, and a strong supporter of the righteous. In order to

establish the adorations of the Ruler-at-will, I shall continue to praise and glorify You, Wise One.

9. I realized You, God Wise, to be progressive when I was encircled by it through good mind. To its question: "For what purpose do you want to acquire knowledge;" I said: "With the gift of homage to Your fire, I shall meditate, as long as I can, in quest of righteousness."

10. So, show me righteousness which I continue to invoke. I am well accompanied by serenity. Ask us what we want to ask you. An inquiry by you amounts to an inquiry by the strong, because the Ruler makes one strong and powerful through you (the enlightenment).

11. I realized You, God Wise, to be progressive when I was encircled by it through good mind, and when I first learned from Your words that it would be difficult for me to teach people the devotion to practice what You told me is the best.

12. And You said: "You have come to understand righteousness, and have not paid attention to disobedience." I would, therefore, set myself so that revelation comes to me in company of a splendid reward, and rewards both the factions (good and bad) with gain.

13. I realized You, God Wise, to be progressive when I was encircled by it through good mind, so that I attain my desired goals. Grant me a long life which no one has dared to ask for, the chosen existence, said to exist only in Your dominion.

14. Just as a wise and powerful man helps his friend, Wise One, give me Your enlightening support, ensuing from righteousness through Your dominion. I shall, then, motivate and lead those loyal to the teachings and all those who remember Your thought-provoking message.

15. I realized You, God Wise, to be progressive when I was encircled by it through good mind, and it showed that silent meditation is the best. One should never try to please wrongful people because they hold the righteous as being totally bad.

16. Therefore, Wise God, I, Zarathushtra choose for myself the very mentality of Yours, which is the most progressive. May righteousness breath a strong life in body. May serenity prevail in the sun-bathed dominion. May the reward for actions be given through good mind.(#)

**Song 9:  
Answering Questions**

1. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. How shall I reverently pay You Your homage? Teach this to a friend like me, Wise One. Let us all be given, through loving righteousness, help so that it comes to us through good mind.

2. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. How shall one who, from the very beginning, seeks the best life, prosper? Indeed, such a person is, through righteousness, a great promoter and a treasure for all. He is, Wise One, a guardian, a mental life-healer, and a friend.

3. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. Who is the foremost creator and parent of righteousness? Who made the sun and the stars in their paths? Who makes the moon wax and wane? I am, Wise One, eager to know all this and more.

4. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. Who holds the earth below, who keeps the sky from breaking away? Who creates the waters and who the plants? Who lends the wind and clouds speed? Who is the creator, Wise One, of good mind?

5. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. Which artist fashioned the light and the darkness? Which artist planned sleep and awakening? Who made the dawn, day, and dusk that remind the wise of the ultimate goal?

6. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. Are the things I speak forth indeed true? Does serenity, by its actions, promote righteousness? For whom has dominion been arranged through good mind? For whom did You create the fruitful, joy-bringing world?

7. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. Who fashioned precious serenity with dominion? Who made the child lovingly attentive to the parent? It is by these questions, Wise One, that I am able to recognize You as the Creator of all by Your progressive mind.

8. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. In order to bear Your directives in mind, Wise One, the words which I ask through good mind and the facts about life to be correctly understood through righteousness are: What shall my soul ultimately attain?

9. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. How shall I enliven for myself the religion the Master of Beneficent Sovereignty teaches me? How to be prompt, like You, Wise One, with lofty rules and live in the same abode with righteousness and good mind?

10. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. That religion is the best for the living which promotes the world through righteousness, and polishes words and actions in serenity. Therefore, the yearnings of my mind are for You, Wise One.

11. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. How does serenity come to those to whom, Wise One, Your religion is taught? I recognize You to be the beginning. All others I consider mental repugnants.

12. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. Who, among those I confer, is righteous, who wrongful? Who sides with evil, and who is evil himself? Why should I not consider the person, who is wrongfully set against Your gains, to be evil?

13. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. How shall we thoroughly remove wrong from us, and keep away from those who are full of disobedience, who do not seek to care for and unite with righteousness, and who do not delight in communion with good mind?

14. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. How shall I deliver wrong into the hands of righteousness so that it is cleansed by Your thought-provoking teaching, and thus introduce a strong movement among the wrongful, which would, Wise One, remove their afflictions and evils?

15. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. If You rule this world through righteousness, then when the two opposing teams come together, keeping in view the rules which You, Wise One, have ordained, where and to which of the two, will You grant victory?

16. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. Of those who exist, who is the victor who protects the world with Your doctrine? Show me clearly the life-healing leader so that the inspiration comes through good mind to that person as well as to any other person to whom You, Wise One, wish.

17. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. How shall I, Wise One, carry the invocation from You, in Your company, so that my voice becomes forceful and ultimately guides to wholeness and immortality in accordance with the thought-provoking message which is a gain from righteousness.

18. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. How shall I earn through righteousness the reward of ten mares with their stallions and a camel,\* which would make me know how to give these persons both—wholeness and immortality.



\* Most probably certain prominent men and women with their names ending in *aspa* (horse) and *ushtra* (camel) whom Zarathushtra was trying to win over to the new religion. Vishtaspa, Jamaspa, and Ferashaoshtra were among the topmost patrons of the Zarathushtrian mission. Farvardin Yasht, the record of veteran men and women missionaries of the early period, have many names with *aspa* and *ushtra* as their second part.

19. This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord. What is the primary punishment for the person who does not give reward to the deserving when approached with true words? However, I know what will befall him later.

20. How could false gods be good rulers? I ask this because those who indulge in lust, with which the mumbling priests, particularly the sacrificing Usigs (a famous family), have delivered the world to fury, and the princes, in their stubbornness, have forced it to lament, and do not reward it through righteousness so as to promote a settled life.

**Ushtavaiti Gâthâ**  
Song 10 - *at fravakhshyâ*

**Song 10:**  
**Proclamation**

1. Now, I shall proclaim, hear and listen, you who have come from near and far as seekers. Now, clearly bear these in mind. Let not the evil teacher, the wrongful, with his evil choice and perverted tongue, destroy life for a second time.

2. Now, I shall proclaim the two foremost mentalities of life. Of these, the more progressive one told the retarding one thus: Neither our thoughts, nor teachings, nor intellects, nor choices, nor words, nor deeds, nor consciences, nor souls agree.

3. Now, I shall proclaim the foremost point of this life, which the Wise God, the Knowing told me: Those of you who do not practice the thought-provoking doctrine the way I understand and explain it, shall experience a woeful end of life.

4. Now, I shall proclaim the best in this life, which, I know through righteousness, the Wise One gave. He is the patron of active good mind, and the good-working serenity is His creation. The all-watching God cannot be deceived.

5. Now, I shall proclaim the word which the Most Progressive One told me. It is the best to be heard by mortals. Those who pay it attention and reverence, shall have wholeness and immortality, and reach the Wise God through their actions of good mind.

6. Now, I shall proclaim the Greatest of all. I shall praise Him through righteousness. He is beneficent to those who exist. May Wise God hear me through the progressive mind. I have taken counsel with good mind in His glory. May He, with this wisdom, guide me best.

7. The living, the departed, and the yet-to-be-born seek their great successes from Him. The souls of the righteous shall eternally be strong. The wrongful shall experience repeated failures. The Wise God has, through His sovereignty, established these principles.

8. I shall seek to turn Him towards us with praises of reverence, because I have now conceived Him with my eyes of good thoughts, words, and deeds, and perceived Him through righteousness as the **Wise God**. Let us, then, offer our glorifications to Him in the House of Song.

9. I shall seek to please Him for us with good mind, for He has granted us the will to choose between progress and retrogress. May the Wise God, through His sovereignty, grant us the exercise to promote our cattle and men with the cooperation of good mind through righteousness.

10. I shall seek to exalt Him for us with praises of serenity, Who, by a new name, is known as the **Wise God**. He grants, through righteousness and good mind, wholeness and immortality in His dominion. May He grant us steadfast strength and endurance.

11. He who denies the false gods and their men, just as they deny him, and unlike others, acknowledges Him in good spirit, is, through his progressive conscience, the beneficent and master of house, rather a friend, brother, and father, O Wise God.

## **Ushtavaiti Gâthâ**

Song 11 - *kam nemoi zâm*

### **Song 11: From Suffering To Success**

1. To what land should I turn? Where should I turn to go? They hold me back from my folks and friends. Neither the community I follow pleases me, nor do the wrongful rulers of the land. How can I please You, Wise God?

2. I know, Wise One, that I am powerless. I have a few cattle and also a few men. I appeal to You. Please, Lord, see to it. Lend me the help a friend gives a friend. Grant, through righteousness, the riches of good mind.

3. When, Wise One, shall those days dawn which will, for the maintainance of the righteous world, motivate the wisdom of the benefactors with advanced teachings. To whom shall this wisdom come with good mind to help? For myself, Lord, I choose Your teachings.

4. Now, the wrongful prevents those, who support righteousness, from promoting the living world, whether of a district or land. It is hard to challenge him because he is hostile in his actions. However, Wise One, he who opposes him with power and life, leads the people as a leader along the paths of good plan.

5. A powerful person, a noble man, as a rule of a contract, welcomes a new comer. He, as a righteous person, is a man of principle. The other (new comer) is a wrongful man. He should, therefore, decide and share the matter with his family. This will, Wise Lord, save him from any violation.

6. But, if an able person does not come to help, he shall himself fall into the binding trap of wrong. He indeed is wrongful who is very good to the wrongful, and he is righteous to whom the righteous is dear. These are the foremost rules of conscience established by You.

7. Who will, O Wise One, give me protection when the wrongful threatens to harm me, other than Your Fire and Mind? It is through the working of these two that, O God, righteousness thrives. Do enlighten my inner-self with this doctrine.

8. The person who undertakes to harm my people shall not have his fiery actions reach me. In fact, they shall recoil with his hatred to him, and shall keep him far from a good way of life. Wise One, hatred does not save one from a bad way of life.

9. Who is that devotee who shall first teach me to regard You as the most worthy of invocation, as the progressive, righteous Lord of actions? People want to know the things that are Yours through righteousness, things You, the Creator of the world has told righteousness, things which are Yours through good mind.

10. Wise God, whoever, man or woman, shall give me what You know to be the best in life—rewards for righteousness, power through good mind—I shall accompany him and her in glorifying such as You are, and shall, with all of them, cross over the sorting bridge.

11. The priests and princes yoke people under duress to destroy life with their evil actions. But their souls and their consciences shall upbraid them when they approach the sorting bridge, because they have been all the time dwelling in the house of wrong.

12. Since through righteousness, the powerful children and grandchildren of the Turanian Fryana have risen to promote their world through serenity with zeal, Wise God has united them with good mind, in order to teach them what concerns their help.

13. Whoever among men pleases me, Zarathushtra Spitama with care, becomes worthy of fame as an earnest person. Wise God shall grant him life, and promote his world through good mind. We shall regard him as an associate of Your righteousness. (#)

14. Who is my, Zarathushtra's righteous companion? Who wishes fame for the Great Fellowship? He, on this great event of initiation, is Kavi Vishtaspa. I shall invoke, with words of good mind, those whom You, Wise God, have established in Your abode. (#)

15. I shall tell you, descendants of Haechataspa Spitama, how to distinguish between law and lawlessness. By such actions, you shall earn righteousness for yourselves, actions which correspond with the Primal Laws of Lord.

16. Ferashaoshtra Hvagva, go with your companions there where, as we both wish, radiant happiness pervades, where serenity accompanies righteousness, where the rule of good mind prevails, where the Wise God dwells in progress.

17. Here, Sage Jamaspa Hvogva, I teach you my message in a poetic and not in an unpoetic language, so that it shall always stay with you as prayers of glorification with the divine inspiration. Whoever distinguishes between law and lawlessness, O Wise Lord, is, through righteousness, a wonderful counselor.

18. Whoever is united with me, I promise him the best through good mind, my only riches. But I oppose him who places himself in opposition to us. Wise One, I want to please You, because this is the discernment of my intellect and mind.

19. Whoever truly accomplishes through righteousness the complete renovation of life for me, Zarathushtra, as is the will of God, deserves the desired future-life in a fruitful living world as a reward. This is what You, the most-knowing Wise One, have taught me. (#)

**Song 12:**  
***Progressive Mentality***

1. To him who, through progressive mentality, performs his duties best in thoughts, words, and deeds in accordance with righteousness, the Wise God grants wholeness and immortality through sovereignty and serenity.

2. He receives the best from the most progressive mentality who speaks words of good mind with his tongue, and performs, with his own hands, deeds of serenity because he has one perception: the Wise God is the creator of righteousness.

3. You are the promoter of this mentality which created the joy-bringing world for him, and have granted peace and serenity for his settlement, because, Wise One, he had consulted good mind.

4. Wise One, it is the wrongful, not the righteous, who continue to keep away from this progressive mentality. A person of very small means can be kind to a righteous person, but a person of great strength can be bad to the wrongful.

5. Wise God, it is through this progressive mentality that You have promised the righteous what indeed is best. But the wrongful shares little from Your love, because he lives by the actions of his evil mind.

6. Wise God, You grant good to both these parties through the progressive mentality by means of fire—light, warmth and energy—because with the growth of serenity and righteousness, it shall convert many a seeker.

**Song 13:**  
***Victory Over Wrong***

1. If, after this, one conquers wrong through righteousness, because one reaches what is always said to be delusions by the false gods and their men, one shall, by these gains, increase in Your glorification, God.

2. Lord, tell me since You know well. What shall henceforth my struggle bring for me and my men? Shall the righteous, Wise One, conquer the wrongful? Because this, indeed, is known to be the good form of life.

3. The teachings which the Beneficent Lord teaches through righteousness are the best for the knowing. Such a man, like You, Wise One, is progressive and wise, even in what is profound teachings through the wisdom of good mind.

4. Whoever, Wise One, has set his mind on the better or the worse, sets his conscience accordingly with actions and words. His desire follows his cherished choice. But in Your wisdom, the end of the two will be different.

5. May good rulers, and not evil rulers, rule over us with actions of good understanding and serenity. Giving health and happiness in life is the best for a man who works for the living world in order to increase its splendor.

6. Indeed the living world is our good dwelling, rather our endurance and strength: two precious gifts of good mind. Now, the Wise God has increased its prosperity through righteousness since the beginning of life.

7. Put down fury, check violence, you who wish to strengthen the promotion of good mind through righteousness, because a progressive man is associated with this. God, his associates are in Your abode.

8. Wise One, what is the strength of Your sovereignty? What is Your reward for my people? What is Your desired manifestations for the devotees who are promoters of good mentality's actions?

9. When shall I know, Wise One, that You have power through righteousness over anyone whose threats are harmful to me? Let the plan of good mind be truly told to me so that the beneficent knows how his reward shall be.



10. When shall, Wise One, humanity settle down in dwellings? When shall they throw out the filthy intoxicant? It is through it that the priests and the wicked rulers of the lands form their evil intellects.

11. When shall, Wise One, serenity with righteousness bring peaceful dwelling and settlement through sovereignty? Who shall establish peace against violence by the wrongful? To whom shall the wisdom of good mind come?

12. Now, they shall be the benefactors of the lands who follow the satisfaction of good mind, and base their actions through righteousness on Your teachings, Wise One. They indeed have been made to fight anger.

**Song 14:**  
***Removing Obstructions***

1. Now, Wise One, Bendva always obstructs me the most, I, who wish to satisfy the badly protected through righteousness. Come to me with good reward and support. I am seeking illumination for him through good mind.

2. Indeed this action of Bendva has made me anxious because the wrongful doctrine certainly prevents one from righteousness. Neither has he ever held the progressive serenity to be his, nor has he ever consulted good mind, Wise One.

3. However, Wise One, this has been put as a choice that righteousness is for the promotion of the doctrine, and wrong is for harming it. Therefore, I long for union with good mind, and disavow all associations with the wrongful.

4. Those who, through their evil intellect, promote anger and cruelty with their tongues are but drones among productive people. Their evil deeds have not been defeated by good deeds. It is they who created false gods, which forms the religion of the wrongful.

5. Now, Wise One, every person, who has linked his religion with good mind through devotion and invocation, is a noble person of serenity through righteousness. He lives, with them all, in Your dominion, Lord.

6. I urge You, Wise One, and Righteousness to tell us what You have in Your wisdom of mind, so that we rightly choose how to proclaim, Lord, the religion which belongs to a Godlike person.

7. And Wise One, let one listen to it through good mind. Let one listen to it through righteousness. You too hear it, Lord. Which friend, which relative abides by laws, and provides a good guidance to the community?

8. This I beg You, Wise Lord, to grant Ferashaushtra the best happy union with righteousness. And give it to my people in Your good dominion. We shall be Your messengers forever.

9. Sage Jamaspa, let the promoter, tailored for promotion, listen to these teachings. The truth-speaking person shall not consider any association with the wrongful, because those who have united their consciences in the reward, are united in righteousness on this Great Event of Choice.

10. And Wise One, You guard in Your abode this good mind, the souls of the righteous, and the reverence that comes with serenity and invocation, a fact that makes the great sovereignty everlasting.

11. Now, the souls of the evil-ruling, evil-doing, evil speaking, evil-conceiving, and evil-thinking return back because of their evil luster, because they really dwell in the house of wrong.

12. What help do You have through righteousness, Wise Lord, what help through good mind for me, Zarathushtra, the invoker, who loves You with praises, and asks for what is best in Your power? (#)

**Song 15:**  
**Communion With God**

1. Does my soul seek any help? Who has been found as a protector for my flock? Who for my men? None except Your righteousness and best mind, when truly invoked.

2. How, Wise One, shall one seek the joy-bringing world, when one wishes it to have settlements, with the honest living in righteousness in a fully sun-bathed region? I shall, with all clarity, settle down among the houses of justice.

3. Indeed, Wise One, it will, through righteousness, dominion, and good mind, be his to whom a promise has been given. That person, strengthened by the reward, will promote his immediate world, so far consumed by the wrongful.

4. Wise God, singing praises, I shall always venerate You with righteousness, the best mind, and sovereignty so that the aspirant stands on the path and listens for the manifestations of revelation for the devotees in the House of Song.

5. Wise God, indeed, it is for Your praise through righteousness. If you are pleased with Your thought-provoker, then manifest a clear help with Your powerful hands which shall give us happiness.

6. Wise One, I, Zarathushtra, am, through righteousness, his friend who carries this thought-provoking message. May the Creator of Intelligence fix the course of his tongue so that he teaches my doctrine through good mind. (#)

7. Now, I shall yoke for You the swiftest and most appropriate invocations on the roads to victories of Your glorification, victories which are, Wise One, strong through righteousness and good mind, and with whose urge, You shall be my help.

8. Wise One, I approach You with loud devotional songs and outstretched hands, You through righteousness with the adoration of a devotee, You through the virtue of good mind.

9. Praising, I shall resort to You, Wise One, with these praises and with deeds of good mind done through righteousness. I shall, until I achieve self-reliance as a reward, wish to be an suppliant of one who is munificent.

10. Now, whatever I have performed and shall perform, and whatever, like the rays of the sun, the wide dawning days, which one will esteem through the eyes of his good mind, are, Wise Lord, through righteousness, for Your glory.

11. I am, Wise One, Your praiser and shall continue to regard myself so, as long as I have the strength and the will through righteousness. This shall promote the laws of life through good mind, for true actions make life most renovated as God wishes.

**Song 16:**  
***The Good Dominion Of Choice***

1. The good dominion is to be chosen. It is the best dividend. In fact, it is devotion for the dedicated, who, Wise One, moves best within righteousness by his deeds. It is for this dominion that I am working for all of us now.

2. I dedicate these deeds, Wise Lord, first of all to You, then to Righteousness, and then to you, Serenity. Show me the desired dominion. Grant me, through Your good mind, the strength to glorify.

3. Let those, who have joined You in action, assemble to hear You, because You are the Lord of true speech with words of good mind. Of these words, Wise One, You are the foremost promulgator.

4. Where does felicity flow? Where does favor take place? Where is righteousness attained? Where is the progressive serenity? Where is the best mind? Where? Through Your dominion, Wise One?

5. I ask these to know how does a settler, by his proper actions, strengthen the world with righteousness? He is a humble intellectual who is a true leader of the lawful and is recognized as the ruler of the rewarded.

6. The Wise God gives, through his sovereignty, much good to him who succeeds for the sake of his conviction. But he who does not strengthen it, shall get much bad at the turning point of his life.

7. You, Wise One, Who have fashioned the world, the waters, and the plants by Your most progressive mentality, grant me, in accordance with good mind's doctrine, immortality, wholeness, steadfast strength, and endurance.

8. Now, I shall speak, Wise One, for You. Let one tell the wise that evil is for the wrongful and radiant happiness is for him who upholds righteousness. Truly, he who tells this thought-provoking message to the wise, will thereby become happy.

9. You grant happiness to both factions through Your bright Fire, Wise One, as well as through the purifying test. This is the established principle of existence: Sufferings for the wrongful, and blessings for the righteous.

10. Now, Wise One, the person who wants to destroy us, is indifferent to this doctrine. He himself is the child of a wrong world, and is one of the malefactors. I invoke righteousness for mine, so that it comes along with good reward.

11. Wise One, which person is a friend of mine, Zarathushtra Spitama? Who, indeed, consults righteousness? With whom is the progressive serenity? Who, indeed, considers himself rightful to belong to good mind and to the Fellowship? (#)

12. The sagacious prince did not satisfy me, Zarathushtra Spitama, on this wide earth when he obstructed me in my gain there, because I have been quick and conveying in my walks and talks. (#)

13. Thus the conscience of the wrongful tramples for itself the true straight conscience. His soul openly upbraids him in front of the sorting bridge, because it is his deeds and words that make him lose the path of righteousness.

14. The mumbling priests are not friends. They are sufficiently far from laws and from the settlement. They take delight in injuring the world with their deeds and teachings, a doctrine that ultimately places them in the house of wrong.

15. The prize, I, Zarathushtra have promised my fellows in the future is the House of Song, in which the Wise One came first. I have promised it to you through gains of good mind and righteousness. (#)

16. Kavi Vishtaspa has attained this through the power of the Fellowship and the songs of good mind. It is the wisdom the progressive Wise God has thought through righteousness so that to teach us radiant happiness.

17. Ferashaoshtra Hvogva has shown me a precious plan for the Good Conscience. May Sovereign Wise Lord grant him power to attain the possession of righteousness.

18. Sage Jamaspa Hvogva has, in his desire for illumination, chosen that sovereignty, the acquisition of good mind, through righteousness. He says: "Wise Lord, grant me the supports which is Yours."

19. Maidyoi-mâhâ Spitama, that person dedicates himself in comprehending it by his religion, and in desiring it for life who says that the laws of God are better for living them through deeds alone.

20. Here, all of you, who are of one will with us in giving goodness: Righteousness is through good mind and through words which stem from serenity. While humbly worshiping, ask for the help of the Wise One.

21. The person who belongs to progressive serenity, promotes righteousness with his intellect, words, deeds, and conscience. The Wise God grants him dominion through good mind. I too shall pray for such a good reward.

22. The Wise God knows best any person of mine for his or her veneration done in accordance with righteousness. I shall, on my part, venerate such persons, passed away or living, by their names, and shall lovingly encircle them.



**Vahishtâ Ishti Gâthâ**  
Song 17 - *vahishtâ ishti*

**Song 17:**  
*Best Wish*

1. The best wish of mine, Zarathushtra Spitama, has been fulfilled, because the Wise God has, on account of my righteousness, granted me blessings, both mental and material, and a good life for ever. Those who hurt me, have also learned the words and deeds of the Good Conscience. (#)

2. And now, let Kavi Vishtaspa, the Zarathushtrian Spitama, and Ferashaoshtra pursue, with mind, words, and deeds, the knowledge for the praise and for the choice of veneration of the Wise One, in order to establish in straight paths the religion which God has granted to the benefactor.

3. Pouruchista Haechataspa Spitama, youngest daughter of Zarathushtra: May He grant you him who is steadfast in good mind, and united with righteousness and with the Wise One. Therefore, consult him with your wisdom, and work with the most progressive and munificent serenity.

4. (She replies) Him I shall emulate and choose, an act which will be an honor for the father, the husband, the settlers, and the family. As a righteous woman among the righteous people, mine be the glorious union of good mind. May the Wise God grant it for the Good Conscience for all the time.

5. (Zarathushtra says) These words I speak to the charming brides, and to you, bridegrooms. Do bear them in mind. Comprehend them with your consciences. Master the life which belongs to good mind. May you each win the other through righteousness. It will, indeed, be a good acquisition for each of you.

6. O men and women, it is true that wrong is attractive and appears to have advantages. But it alienates one away from one's self. It ends in woefulness and bad reputation. It destroys happiness for the wrongful. It defiles truths. With these, you shall be destroying your mental life.

7. But the reward of this Fellowship shall be yours as long as you remain united in weal and woe with all your heart in wedlock. Thus the mentality of the wrongful disappears. However, if you abandon the Fellowship, then the last word you shall utter is "woe."

8. It is with such actions that evil doers become prone to deception and ridicule. Let them all scream for themselves. Let, by means of good rulers,

killings and woundings be prevented and peace be brought to homes and settlements. Let afflictions be gone. He is the greatest who restrains violent death. And let this happen soon!

9. Activity with evil doers yields to decrease in worth. In their anger, they defile truth and are criminals. Where is the righteous lord, who would oppose them for life and liberty? It is, Wise One, Your dominion that provides an honest-living oppressed a better living.

**A Airyemâ Ishya**  
Closing stanza –

***A Airyemâ Ishya,  
The World Zarathushtrian Fellowship***

May the desired Fellowship come for the support of the men and women of Zarathushtra, for the support of good mind, so that the conscience of every person earns the choice reward—the reward of righteousness—a wish regarded by the Wise God.

# **Appendix I: Gists of Ahuna Vairya, Songs 1 to 17, and A Airyemâ Ishya**

## ***Ahunavaiti Gatha***

### **Song 1 - Humbly I pray**

Asho Zarathushtra begins his songs, original in nature, with a humble prayer in the presence of God. He prays in earnest for divine inspiration, the very message he has to proclaim. He has a mission and he is dedicated to it: It is to please God and serve to promote the living world. He and his companions pray for both mental and material blessings with a long life, only to spread the divine message to all and even convince the barbarian and unruly to listen to it and make a right choice. They are careful not to violate any divine principle. They want to establish the life on the primal basis of the divine order of righteousness, good mind, and serenity. They pray for it and know well that prayers with a noble purpose are heard and answered.

### **Song 2 - The Choice of Asho Zarathushtra**

#### **As the Lord and Leader of the World**

**Introduction:** The second song of the Gathas is an interesting play. It provides the reason why Asho Zarathushtra was chosen by the living world as the Lord and Leader exclusively on the basis of his righteousness and competence. The play is not only the oldest Indo-Iranian play on record (approximately 3700 years old), but one can even go further to state that it is the oldest dramatic poem in the world which survives in the very words of the author, the Hero of the play — Zarathushtra Spitama.

**Commentary:** Might is right in the living world. The strong are oppressing the weak and depriving them of their legitimate rights. It is a world of the survival of the fittest, rather the strongest. This law is perhaps good for the jungle. But man has outgrown being a mere animal. He is a creator now. He has discovered how to make fire. He has discovered metals and learned how to mould them into instruments. He has invented many articles. These discoveries have made him very powerful. He can make wonderful things and, equally, he can destroy these

wonderful things. His destructive aspect poses a great threat, not only to his own existence, but to all of life on the good earth.

Therefore, the law of the survival of the strongest cannot hold true any longer. With wonder weapons in hand, now weaklings can wipe out the fittest, the strongest and the finest. However, man the creator has a very clear and strong thinking faculty. He can be guided by his **good mind** to be always constructive. His good mind must, therefore, be trained and strengthened to be his only guide. He must do things right. He must be taught that “Might is not right” but that “Right is might.” The living world will survive only if man is guided by his good mind. There must be a radical change, a turning point. Wisdom should take over and the lead force and power. Only the wise and benevolent should be the lords and leaders of the world.

This requires two things: Power to repel aggression and control oppression, and wisdom to eliminate them and promote permanent peace and prosperity. The living world, therefore, is in dire need of a person who can comply with these two requirements.

That person, in the play, is Asho Zarathushtra. He is the person who seeks to bring in the new change, and introduce a complete departure from the past policy of senseless force and aggression. He is naturally chosen by the free living, rather the thinking world both as the Lord and the Leader.

It is after understanding the play that one realizes the true significance of *Ahuna Vairya* or *Yathâ Ahu*, the opening, yet the outstanding, stanza of the first Gatha, *Ahunavaiti*, meaning the song which contains *Ahuna-vairya*, the stanza of the “Choice of the Lord.” Let us now turn to it:

Both the lord and the leader are to be chosen because of their righteousness. These two appointments are made with good mind, so that the acts of life are done for the Wise One, and the dominion of God is well established, in which the chosen person becomes the Rehabilitator of the rightful who are oppressed.

This short stanza of 20 words and two particles encapsulates the spirit of the entire Gathas.. It emphasizes that both the lord and the leader required to transform the world into a divine dominion should be chosen only on the criterion of their righteousness and precision. The choice is made by good thinking and the correct judgement, an act that helps one to dedicate his or her very life to God and thus work toward establishing the chosen dominion in which there would remain no oppression and thus none oppressed. It is a unique formula for a divinely inspired, sound democracy which promises mental and material peace and prosperity for all. The emphasis is on *vairyo*, to be chosen, worthy of election; *ashât-chît hachâ*, only on account of righteousness; *vañheush manañho*, of good mind, based on good thinking; *shyaothananâm añheush*, acts of life; *Mazdâi*, for the Wise One; *khshatrem-châ Ahurâi*, the kingdom belongs to

Lord; *dadat vâstârem*, appointed a rehabilitator, given a settlement; *drigubyo*, to the wrongfully restrained, the oppressed righteous.

Keeping the above points, we can realize the significance of the entire song. It is the basis for evolving a peaceful world. It provides us with the freedom to choose our spiritual and physical leader and then work with him or her to create the world which we have all along been desiring.

That is the reason the Avesta lays the highest emphasis on Ahuna Vairya formula. According to it, it concerns the principles which lead to the salvation—“the best life, the best righteousness, the best enlightenment... Should the material world understand it, memorize it, it would lead to immortality.” (Yasna 19, an Avestan commentary on Ahuna Vairya).

### **Song 3 - Good and Evil**

**Notes:** *Mainyu* is derived from the Avesta/Sanskrit root *man*, to think and with its agentive/instrumental suffix of *yu*, means “means or way of thinking” and therefore mind and mentality. The interpretation of spirit, in its abstract or personified form, is a much later development.

In this song or elsewhere in the Gathas, the two mentalities, also called choices, are confined to human behavior only and do not concern the cosmic world at all.

The term *spenta mainyu*, standing for the divine creative faculty, has no opponent or adversary in the Gathas, and the term “angra mainyu” does not exist in the Gathas. The so-called opponent “spirits” are also a later development.

**Gist:** Asho Zarathushtra advises people to listen to the best words, then consider them with a clear, bright mind, and then each person make the choice for his or herself. Among those best words are his new doctrine of good and evil. Good and evil stem from two mentalities a person has since the beginning of one’s life. A beneficent person chooses good and a base person the evil. Thus these two mentalities create life and “not living” for a person—life with all its potentialities, or otherwise a living without them, making a person one of the walking dead. A person choosing good will perform beneficial deeds and please God, but a person, fond of false gods, falters in his choice and once he indulges in thinking evil, he resorts to anger, a mood which brings destruction to people because anger is the source of all violence. The person who takes to good mind and righteousness, finds strength, stability, and ultimately God. But even he who goes astray and suffers the consequences, may realize the truth and give up deceit for truth. Therefore, let all of us pray to be among those who make a fresh

world, a world in which the wise unite to defeat evil and create a happy life of wisdom and righteousness. Therefore, let us fully understand that the principles of a prosperous life and a miserable living. Wrong and deceit bring long suffering but righteousness and truth result in true happiness.

### **Song 4 - Guidance**

After explaining good and evil, Zarathushtra points out that his message will prove good to bad people and prove the best for those who are already devoted to God. He says that since it is not easy to discriminate good and evil, one needs a guide. He, as one, explains the facts based on wisdom and knowledge. He pays more attention to those going astray, because as long as there are wrongful people, the spiritual and social evils cannot be eradicated. But in spite of this guidance, Zarathushtra lays emphasis on free will and sound discrimination of the people. He wants them to grow in knowledge to a desired level so that they are able to make their own choice. He says that the reward of righteous deeds are good, and that evil actions lead to long life of sufferings. But the ultimate salvation of wholeness and immortality is for all. It is easy and smooth for the righteous but hard and difficult for the wrongful.

Zarathushtra continues to pray to God for enlightenment and success. He also blesses the wise who have listened to his divine message and are working zealously to spread it to mankind.

### **Song 5 - Aberration**

This song is, in fact, an exposure of the fraud and aberration practiced by the priests and princes of the old cult. The daevas, false gods and their worship were the creation of evil mentality and deceit. It is superstitions that deviate a man from thinking right. However, they become a good source of income for the cunning, who continue to hoard what they can extract from the simple people. These cunning persons are the ritualistic priests, called *karapan* by Asho Zarathushtra. The word actually means “arrangers of rituals,” but it also means “chatterers” and “mumblers” which they were indeed. They were not alone. There were the rulers, turned into luxury lovers through the spoils they had accumulated. The two, having a common vested interest of exploiting the people, had joined hands. They kept the people in darkness and ignorance. Their increasing lust for wealth had turned them into tyrants, an action that earned them people’s hatred. However, they forgot that God was watching them and that a day would dawn when a thought-provoking genius would rise and lead the people out of their clutches.

It may be noted that this is the only song in which Asho Zarathushtra mentions a legendary person—Yima/Jamshed/Jamshid—about whom it was said that he fell because of his arrogance and false pride. He, however, leaves the judgement to God.

## **Song 6 - Devotion to Duty**

The entire song is devoted to Zarathushtra's divine mission of communicating with God only to gain guidance to spread the universal message, and to serve God and humanity. He rose to eliminate the ills that plagued every unit of human society. He rose to guide humanity on the righteous path of the highest wisdom. Years of untiring preaching made his voice heard among the people who formed the nucleus of his *Maga*: the Great Fellowship of his companions. Now, he wanted it to go beyond this circle, to the settled people of the land. He wanted more strength and more enlightenment for his expanding mission. He wanted courage that comes with supreme serenity, the sublime strength that comes with progressive thinking, the invigorating energy that comes with righteous conduct, the happiness that blesses a good mind—and he wanted all these to strengthen his conceptions. In return for all these favors, he made a surprising offer. He dedicated to God his life, mind, words, deeds, his communion, and the very power and endurance he was asking. That is why he broke into a beautiful prayer—a prayer for a divine vision that would grant him communion with God. He wanted his reverential prayers, rather the dedication of his humble service, to manifest itself among his companions. He prayed for the success of his mission. And we know, he was granted this wish.

Let us join Asho Zarathushtra, and pray for enlightenment through righteousness and good mind. Let us also dedicate ourselves to serve the Great Mission. Let us pass on his divine message beyond our still small circle to humanity at large. Let us be enlightened, only to enlighten others.

## **Song 7 - Renovation**

In his last song of Ahunavaiti Gatha, Asho Zarathushtra begins, as always, with a prayer in praise of God Wise and asks for divine help and guidance. He wants the divine fire, the God-given bright mind to help his supporters and to thwart his antagonists. He dedicates his deeds to God to accomplish his mission. He wants to introduce a drastic change in life. His doctrine, based on good mind and righteousness, poses a danger to vested interests. But he is determined to continue his task and frustrate their inimical designs. He wants devoted souls and beneficent people to come forward and help him. He wants them to devote their lives in serving a world which is full of good potential. He wants to rehabilitate the people who have lost their rights because of aggression. And



finally as a reward, he wants God to help him in renovating the world and maintain it as fresh as God wishes it to be. He wishes to return to God happy and content upon the completion of his mission.

## ***Ushtavaiti Gatha***

### **Song 8 - Realization—Self, Nature, God**

**Note:** A very good way to develop the faculty of thinking is to meditate in a serene atmosphere. There one can think and contemplate first on one's self, then the environment, and then nature, only to realize the truth about the creation and the Creator. Meditation means contemplation, to focus thoughts on a certain object. It can best be done facing a shining altar—fire, a lighted flame, a brilliant light. It helps to illuminate one's mind so much so that one feels encircled by the illumination. It is this mental illumination that enlightens one to enter into communion with the Supreme Intelligence Being—Ahura **Mazda**.

**Gist:** Ushtâ Ahmâi, the song of meditation, illumination, and enlightenment describes in beautiful poetry how Asho Zarathushtra seeks and realizes, through observation and contemplation, and then silent meditation his God as the Most Progressive Intelligent Being. He realizes that life has its consequences. The divine law says that you reap what you sow. He realizes his duty, the duty of an Enlightened One: Enlighten others, whosoever they are, and root out the evil that plagues human life. He realizes that it is a difficult task to do so. The priests, whose sacrificial fire rituals aimed at keeping the people in ignorance, he categorically rejects, oppose him. Yet he chooses the most progressive divine mentality and determines to start a new movement, the movement towards enlightenment for all.

Zarathushtra asks for divine support to guide mankind to righteousness. He begins his mission, and that places the world at a new turning point. False gods and their deceptive priests and tyrant princes recede. Only the Wise and Ruling-at-Will God is recognized. The universal law of righteousness, enlightened mind, and liberty prevails. True happiness lies in making others truly happy. It is a new order to create a new world, a sun-bathed dominion of enlightenment.

## Song 9 - Answering Questions

**Notes:** Questions lead to discoveries, discoveries enhance our knowledge, and knowledge guides one to salvation. A good look around ourselves to see the earth, the sky and what is between them, to discover the order that revolves them in perfect harmony, and to study our own human society would unfold many truths—above all the wisdom that creates and maintains them. It makes us realize the Supreme—God, and we get a clearer picture of the creation around us. The first thing the discoveries do is to remove all imaginations and superstitions about the universe we see. However, all appears to be right except for the human society. It is groping in darkness and ignorance. Ignorance breeds superstitions. Since ancient times, there have been persons who have thrived on people's ignorance. They have taken every advantage to exploit them through their superstitions. This has created disorder in society, disorder which is corrected by force only. This force is used by the very people who create disorders, with the result that disorder keeps on multiplying. And the exploiters continue to keep the people in darkness so that they are able to dupe and rob them. Force recoils with force. Atrocities continue. And when they reach their peak, the reactions are violent too. All this causes disturbances, wars, and bloodshed.

Zarathushtra comes with a new remedy, a new message. He does not believe in violent force, but in peaceful knowledge, in steady enlightenment. This knowledge may be acquired through open-minded and first-hand study of nature so as to realize the super-wise, super-powerful creator, maintainer, and promoter—God. This is the way he realizes the truth. He wants others to realize the same. He wants them to know the truth, the facts. He wishes them to be passive, prudent, and devoted to the mission of promoting the God-created world. He turns to society with his new doctrine. He meets with different people. Some are good, some a little bad, and some very evil. Some listen to him. Some ignore him. And some confront him. He is opposed by vested interests of the priests and princes, the persons at the root of all social disorders. He does not give up. He continues preaching. His efforts are rewarded. He wins over many a stalwart. He has a team which he knows will ultimately win the race. He and his companions are for promoting the world, a world freed from violence, enjoying freedom, relishing peace, living happily, progressing steadily, and above all, having full faith in God and the good creation. He and his companions turn to God alone in their prayers, and at the same time, harmonize with nature in promoting an ever-better world.

The Gathas are a masterpiece of songs, divine inspired to inspire all those who recite them. They are a very thought-provoking message. However, this subtle song has its own beauty. It is full of questions, which are, in fact, their own answers. Every question makes one wonder, think, and then have the answer. The answering questions reveal that Zarathushtra must have asked others many questions, and when he was not satisfied with their illogical answers, he started asking himself. The answers came through good mind he had developed so

thoughtfully. The answers led him to the good God, and he became fully enlightened about his mission—to lead human society on a new spiritual and material path of progress, wholeness, immortality, and godliness. His questions put a thinking person on a holy quest for the Creator through serving the created, a novel way of stimulating one to seek knowledge and to be Godlike.

### **Song 10 - Proclamation**

This is again a beautiful song in which Asho Zarathushtra begins the first six stanzas with “Now, I shall proclaim ...” He makes the proclamations because he has had his cherished experience of communicating with God—**Ahura Mazda**, God Wise, and now feels fully confident of his mission. And he makes his proclamations in an assembly of people who have come from far and near to listen to him. He cautions the people who have come to be aware of the persons who are attempting to dissuade them back into the old cult. He makes it clear that the two mentalities—the better and the evil—have nothing in common. The choice of one means abandoning the other. That is why he wants his listeners to understand and practice his doctrine, otherwise they may suffer a bad end. His doctrine, based righteousness, good mind and serenity, leads to wholeness and immortality, and to God. Asho Zarathushtra then breaks into a prayer. He prays to God for strength and endurance to spread the message because all human beings—dead, alive, or yet to be born seek success from God alone. The souls of the righteous will always, here and hereafter, be strong, but the wrongful will face failures in their climb to wholeness. God has, at the same time, given mankind freedom of choice. One may make progress or fall back. Progress means promotion of human society and our living environment. He finishes his proclamation by stating that those who deny false gods and their followers by actively serving the progressive movement are truly the benefactors and supporters of society.

### **Song 11 - From Suffering to Success**

This song presents two phases of Asho Zarathushtra’s good life: The early missionary days when he suffered persecution, and the days when he had won over the persons who spread his message far and wide. The first phase shows him a weak person who had a small number of persons to help him, and who hardly had any material backing. His mission was opposed by the parrot priests of the old cult and by the poet princes. Both had their highly vested interests at stake. They were strong and he was not in a position to challenge them. Their opposition grew to an extent that even his relatives and close friends were not allowed to meet him. Even men of influence could not help him. He was left alone, but he was not forlorn. He had Ahura Mazda. He turned to Him and broke into a plea: Where should he go? What should he do? He received divine

inspiration: God had endowed him with a bright mind and clear thinking. He had a bright idea: he resolved to leave his home behind and face the greatest risk of his life by visiting the chief poet prince of the region and his courtful of princes and priests—Kavi Vishtaspa!

The second phase shows him on the road to success. First he met the powerful Turanian princes, the Frayanas, who listened to him, accepted his message, and became his allies. Next, after two years of persuasion, he blessed and welcomed King Vishtaspa into the Good Religion. Vishtaspa became the chief patron in spreading the message. Zarathushtra's own relatives, the Spitamas, joined him. Two stalwart brothers, Ferashaushtra and Jamaspa, famed for their wisdom, followed next. Both became his main missionaries. One preached to people. The other learned the doctrine, now composed in seventeen songs—the Gathas. People had gathered around their benefactor—**Saoshyant**—to zealously work to start a completely fresh life in a fruitful world with a bright future.

## ***Spenta Mainyu Gatha***

### **Song 12 - Progressive Mentality**

**Notes:** (1) The first stanza of the song is the only place in the Gathas in which all the seven principles that were later transformed into “Amesha Spentas—Incremental Immortals” are mentioned. Their use in one place defines well their complementary relations to one another. Another place (Song VII.11) where more abstract principles are used, also proves the same idea. (2) The word “spenta mainyu” is present in all the six stanzas. (3) This is shortest song in the Gathas.

**Gist:** Spenta Mainyu, the progressive mentality, is the divine wisdom which creates, maintains and promotes the creation. It is the faculty which created the joy-bringing world for the wise who would settle and prosper in peace. Should man promote the faculty in himself, he too would become Godlike. He will achieve wholeness and immortality through his best thoughts, words, and deeds performed in the right way and in a serene dominion. Those who consult their good mind, promote their progressive mentality. Those who do not, live a life of evil mind. However, the divine light and love light the way to progressive mentality, and help many a seeker to become converted, literally “choose the religion.”

### **Song 13 - Victory over Wrong**

Wrong results in wrong ways and good produces yet more goodness. Wrong must be conquered. This is achieved by means of righteousness, good mind, and profound wisdom, a wisdom that promotes one to be Godlike. Fury and violence, practiced by fanatic religious leaders and wicked rulers who indulge in intoxicating rituals, must be abandoned. Spreading health and happiness is a foremost principle of life. Government must be run only by the good, wise and righteous rulers. Life on the earth must be led in peace, prosperity, and progress. It is only then that true reward of good life is obtained. It is only then that the divine dominion is established. It is only then that the mission of Zarathushtra is fulfilled.

### **Song 14 - Removing Obstructions**

The greatest obstruction to progress are the bigots who prevent people from taking the right path. This is because they do not think with a calm and clear mind. Their evil intellect makes them create false deities and false beliefs. Because of their restraining tactics, they become a burden on a productive society. In fact, they are parasites. One should break away from them. One should turn to devotion and prayers, and become balanced through righteousness. One should abide by the law and guide the community. It is these deeds that make one Godlike.

Zarathushtra then turns to Ferashaushtra and Jamaspa, two wise brothers, who have chosen the Good Religion. He wants them to know that the new turn in their life unites them with the righteous only. They, like other good souls, live in the divine abode in which good mind, peace, and prayers exist in an ever-lasting environment.

Here in stanza 11, one finds a hint that the souls of evil-doers return and remain in their evil world. But as we see in other stanzas, particularly Song 5, they too eventually progress onward to wholeness and immortality.

### **Song 15 - Communion with God**

With difficulties overcome, success follows success, and Zarathushtra breaks into prayers to uplift his soul and strengthen his mission. He communes with his Lord Wise to advance his cause. He is seeking to promote an ideal society on a "sun-bathed" joy-bringing earth. He wants his companions to go forth and spread his message to the whole of humanity. He wants people to become self-reliant in life, because self-reliance is truly a good reward. It gives one the power to be good to others, to be beneficent. A triumphant Zarathushtra is determined to

praise the Wise Lord because his prayers turn into solid actions that make life on the earth as new and modern as God wishes. This song is the song of “progressive renovation.” It is a communion with God to renovate the human community in the joy-bringing world.

Note, the last line which in Avesta is “*Haithyâ vareshtâm hyat vasnâ ferashotemem* - true actions make life most renovated as God wishes.” It is a part of the daily prayer with which one begins tying one’s *kushti*, the sacred girdle of service, around the waist, a reminder of Asho Zarathushtra’s determination to maintain an ever-splendid world through continuous modernization, and a stimulation to continue to be his partner in this task.

## ***Vohu Khshathra Gatha***

### **Song 16 - A Chosen Dominion, A Good Government**

The ideal government is the one chosen by the people. It is the best reward, a divine boon. Asho Zarathushtra works for that with dedication. Such a government is an ideal place of righteousness, progressive peace, true happiness, and best intellectual activities. One must work to strengthen such a government. And the head of such a government, a lord in spirit and leader in matter, must be a qualified person of humble nature and firm faith. One who tries to weaken such a government, shall suffer the consequence, because the divine rule is: Evil for the wrongful and true happiness for the righteous.

The princes and priests, interested only in their own welfare, do not please Zarathushtra. They do harm to the living world, an act that recoils and has grave consequences for them. The persons Zarathushtra considers his friends are those who are wise, truthful, peaceful, progressive in the human fellowship. Of them, King Vishtaspa, Ferashaushtra, Jamaspa and his own cousin Madyoi-Maha are some. They, and many more, support Asho Zarathushtra in his divine mission of spreading the thought-provoking message. They, in turn, are granted life in the divine presence, in a serene state of song and music. And although it is God Who knows best how dedicated to righteousness a person is, Zarathushtra venerates his companions, living or not, by their names and encircles them in love, in a true tribute to those who are devoted to God and God’s creation.

## ***Vahishta Ishti Gatha***

### **Song 17 - Best Wish**

A successful Zarathushtra feels that his wishes of spreading the divine message to the entire humanity have come true. He finds that his early enemies have learned about the beauties of the Good Conscience and have accepted its principles. He appreciates the services being rendered by his companions and as he prepares to retire, he urges them to continue their good work.

Then he turns his attention to the marriage of his youngest daughter Pouruchista. He encourages her to choose a worthy mate. She does so by choosing the man who later becomes her father's successor: Jamaspa Hvogva who was specially chosen and trained by Zarathushtra to lead the Fellowship. The happy occasion provides Zarathushtra with an appropriate opportunity to address future brides and bridegrooms. He cautions them not to forget their duties before God and the divine creation by indulging in a irresponsible, self indulgent lifestyle. He urges them to strive together in the glorious effort to create a better world through their personal devotion to righteousness. Then he emphasizes that since the whole structure of the ideal world society is built on the foundation of righteous families, each serving as a brick to be used in building a wonderful new world for humanity, every Zarathushtrian has a profound responsibility to marry wisely and to raise a happy, productive, well-adjusted and devout family. Thus divorce is strongly discouraged and marital couple are urged to be firmly committed to making their marriages succeed, to work together even through the bad times they share to preserve their love and unity.

The "Best Wish" is truly a sublime swan song of Zarathushtra.

### **A Airyema Ishya**

#### **Concluding Benediction - World Zarathushtrian Fellowship**

A world fellowship of men and women to bring peace and prosperity to every living being in the world is one of the main goals of the Good Conscience. It is the fulfillment of Zarathushtra's mission, a mission aimed at perfecting the world in mind and matter, spirit and body toward immortality and union with God. It is the fellowship for which he rose, worked and succeeded. It is the universal union which is desired. It is a unity which would bring true happiness to every person in every family. It is the unity built by loving families. It is the outcome of true spiritual and physical democracy in which there would exist no oppressor and no oppressed. It is to tread the path of righteousness with a good and sound mind. Its reward: righteousness.

While “*Yatha Ahu*” is the beginning of the Gathas, “*A Airyema Ishya*” is their end. One is the aim of creating a perfectly happy world and the other is the culmination of the aim. A *Airyema Ishya* is a prayer which wishes us a worthy world of unity, unity through the Good Conscience, unity through the Fellowship it establishes. It is a beautiful benediction with which Asho Zarathushtra concludes his **inspired and inspiring songs**—The *Gathas*—of divine love and sublime guidance.

May we continue to follow the divine principles of wholeness and immortality by studying and practicing the thought-provoking message of the Gathas. And may we continue to be worthy members of the Zarathushtrian Fellowship.



## Appendix II:

### *Gathic Terms (Glossary)*

In order to fully understand the Gathas, one must bear in mind the exact meanings of the words used by Asho Zarathushtra. It is rare that a word in any language can be translated into another language by any one term and still retain its full range of meaning and associated linguistic implication and “color.” This is all the more so when the two languages are separated by such a huge gulf of time and culture as are modern English and the Gathic language spoken by Zarathushtra and his companions. Nevertheless I have used, as far as I could, single English terms in order not to burden the translation with two or more English words, or by introducing foreign words. But to assist the reader to more fully understand and appreciate the profound Teachings of Asho Zarathuhstra, this concise glossary is appended here. It is followed by English renderings of the Avestan terms.

**Ahu:** derived from *ah*, meaning “to be, to exist, to be present,” it stands for an outstanding *being*, a distinctive *entity* and therefore a *person of distinction*. The Gathas explain *ahu* as the person “who is free from enmity, who helps the living world, who activates the noble, and who can repel the fury of the wrongful (Song 1.2,3).” Thus *ahu* is a person who holds authority. It is generally rendered as “lord” in English, a term also used by me in my translation. The obvious reason for rendering this word as “lord” is that in an alternate form (*Ahura*), it is used as a term for God (see below). However, the reader must bear in mind the true significance of *ahu* and avoid any misunderstanding and false associations, in English, with the idea of a “lord” as one who holds a position of arbitrary authority as a result of an inheritance rather than, as Zarathushtra intended, one who is democratically appointed to a position of trust as a result of proven, individual merit and righteousness.

**Ahura:** this is the same word as *ahu* above with suffix *-ra* added. This is a suffix of action which intensifies and strengthens the word. It means “being, existing, present.” When applied to God, it means *The Supreme Being*. It forms a separable part of a dual name given to God—*Ahura Mazda*—by Zarathushtra. In harmony with other translators and Western tradition, I have rendered it variously as God and Lord.

**Airyaman:** meaning “noble-minded,” stands for the Fellowship, the highest unit of human society. The other two are *khvaetu*, family, and *verezena*, community (see below).

**Ajyâiti:** With the negative suffix *a+* *jyâti*, to live, to have a way of life, it means “not-living.” It is the consequence of choosing the evil mentality as a guide in life.

It means living a life devoid of the potentialities a good life can offer. It is having a life and yet “not living” it as it should be lived. (see *gaya*)

**Amesha Spenta:** is a non-Gathic term meaning “the Progressive Immortals.” Avesta contexts reveal that originally it was applied to any righteous person who was believed to have reached the final stages of “wholeness” and “immortality.” The companions of Asho Zarathushtra and their descendents as well as any person who had devoted his life to promulgating the divine message of Zarathushtra were called “*amesha spentas*, the progressive immortals, the “ever-living” promulgators of the Good Religion. This is what the unknown Avestan poet means in his or her “Salutation” in the beginning of the Gathas (see page ...). Later, when six or seven of the Gathic “Primal Principles of Life” were personified, in fact animated, to form a pantheon of Godhead, the term took a new meaning. The Amesha Spentas are the six “archangel-like” entities in the institutionalized Zarathushtrian religion. (see Primal Principles of Life)

**Ameretât** (also **Ameretatât**) means “deathlessness” and “immortality.” Together with *Haurvatât*, it is the ultimate goal, and represents the completion of our evolutionary development and the achievement of our life on the earth. It depicts the eternal communion with God. (see *Haurvatât*)

**Aramaiti:** derived from *âram*, “to be at rest, to be tranquil,” means tranquility, stability, serenity. I have rendered it as serenity. When used with the adjective *spenta*, “progressive,” it means “ever-increasing serenity.” It is one of the main “Primal Principles of Life,” which is to say, an attribute of the Wise God which we seek to cultivate within ourselves.

**Asha:** stands for “truth, order, righteousness.” It is the universal law of righteous precision. It may best be explained by stating that it means “to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right place, and with the right means in order to obtain the right result.” It would be something which is of constructive and loving benefit not only for oneself but also for one’s fellow creatures and for God. It is constructive, beneficial and unselfish precision par excellence. It has been translated as righteousness and precision. Asha is one of main “Primal Principles of Life.”

**Ashavan:** literally means “possessing **asha**.” It stands for a righteous person, a precise human being. It is also used as a title for saintly persons.

**Asho:** is a later contracted form of the word “ashavan” and has the same meaning. It is now used as a reverential title of Zarathushtra.

**Bendva:** An old-cult antagonist of Zarathushtra. Bandhu Gaupâyana was a Rig Vedic rishi.

**Bâmi:** Earth. The Aryans imagined that the Earth was made up of seven regions of which only the seventh was inhabited by humans and other living beings. This inhabited region, called *Khvânirasa* in the later Avesta, was the fifth and the last geographical unit of human settlement. (see *demana*, *vis*, *shoithra* and *dakhyu* for the other four units.)

**Chinvato-peretu:** literally “the bridge of sorting or culling,” is the state wherein the soul of a righteous person passes on to immortality but the soul of a wrongful person turns back and remains behind in order to further mature spiritually. I have rendered it as “the sorting bridge.”

**Daenâ,** derived from *dî*, “to see, conceive, perceive,” is a person’s inner-perception, the conscience. It also stands for one’s chosen religion. Zarathushtra named the religion he founded as *Daena Vañuhi*, the Good Conscience.

**Daenâ Vañuhi:** meaning “the Good Conscience,” is the name given to the religion Asho Zarathushtra founded. It is the inner-perception of a wise, discerning person which should guide him well on the path of righteousness. And since a true perception must be universal in validity, *Daena*, particularly in plural, means “religion.” The compound term has been rendered as the religion of “Good Conscience,” or simply the “Good Religion.”

**Daeva,** literally “the shining one.” was the term applied to lower gods of the polytheistic Aryan pantheon. Zarathushtra intentionally chooses to derive it from a homonymous root *div*, meaning “to deceive,” in order to make an important point and so uses it to mean “deceptive or false gods,” and urges us to reject and avoid them as well as their ardent upholders.

**Dakhyu:** means “a land” or a country made up of many districts. It is the fourth geographical unit of human settlement. (see below *demana*, *vis* and *shoithra*, and above *bumi* for the other four units.)

**Demâna:** is “a house, a home.” It is the first geographical unit of human settlement. (see *vis*, *shoithra*, *dakhyu*, and *bumi* for the other four units.)

**Dregvant:** literally “possessing wrong,” it stands opposed to *ashavan* (see *ashavan*) and has been rendered as “the wrongful.” (see *druj*)

**Drigu:** literally “restrained,” is the righteous person who stands deprived of his rights through oppression. Zarathushtra stands for his full restoration and rehabilitation in a righteous society. I have translated it as “oppressed.”

**Druj,** literally “harmful lie, wrong,” stands opposed to *asha*, righteousness.

**Ferashaushtra Hvogva:** A great sage who, with his brother Jamaspa, joined Zarathushtra in his divine mission. He was a foremost preacher of the Good Religion. He survived Zarathushtra by fifteen years.

**Frayâna:** A chief Turanian tribal family who joined and greatly helped Zarathushtra at the crucial time of his emigration from his birthplace

**Gaethâ,** from *gay*, “to live,” is the living world of mankind and animals. It is the earth as a self-contained, organic whole, a living organism for which we, as its self-aware, intelligent evolutionary offspring, have a profound responsibility to promote and to protect from all harm, especially from that which has been induced by our own self-centered ecological ignorance. Asho Zarathushtra is the first person to clearly envision the interrelatedness of all life on earth. He is the world’s first concerned environmentalist. (see *go*)

**Garo-Demâna:** is the “Abode of Songs,” the ultimate and serene state of the wholeness and immortality of soul.

**Gaya:** Life with all its potentialities; a true, righteous, constructive, world-promoting life. (see *ajyâiti*)

**Go,** literally cow, allegorically stands for **gaethâ**, the living world in the Gathas. (see *gaethâ*)

**Haurvatât:** means “wholeness” and “completion.” It is the perfecting process and final completion of our material and spiritual evolution. This transforming process occurs through *voḥu manah*, good mind, *asha*, righteousness, *voḥu khshathra*, good dominion, *âramaiti*, serenity, *serausha*, inspiration, and *haurvatat*, all led by *spenta mainyu*, the progressive mentality, toward *ameretât*, immortality. (see all these references).

**Hudâ:** literally means “good-giving,” and therefore “generous, beneficent.”

**Hudânu:** same as *hudâ* with an emphasizing suffix *nu*. It has been rendered as “munificent.”

**Jamâspa Hvogva:** a sage who became one of the foremost disciples of Zarathushtra and succeeded him as the Religious Leader. He married Pouruchista, Zarathushtra’s youngest daughter, and tradition says that he and his elder brother Ferashaushtra became the chief ministers of King Vishtaspa’s court. He survived Zarathushtra by sixteen years.

**Karapan**, means “one who arranges and performs (rituals)” but derived from another homonym root, it means “one who murmurs and moans.” They were the priests of the old Aryan cult. It has been translated as the murmuring priests, because this is what Zarathushtra found them to be.

**Kavi** were the princes. They were learned and therefore the title *kavi*, meaning “a sage.” Zarathushtra rose against them because they were exploiters of the people and allies of the Karapans. Kavi Vishtaspa was the only prince who chose the Good Religion and became one of the main supporters of Zarathushtra in spreading the religion and founding a good government. Kavi has been translated as “prince,” or “epicurean prince.”

**Khvaetu**: belonging to self, means a family. It is first unit of human society. (See *verezena*, settlement, and *airyaman*, fellowship)

**Khshathra**: derived from *khshi*, meaning to settle in peace, to rule a settlement, it denotes the “power” to settle people in peace. Used with the adjective of *vohu*, good, or *vairyo*, to be chosen, it stands for benevolent power, good rule, and the chosen order. It is the divine dominion chosen by free and wise people. It is the ideal government in spirit and matter. I have translated it as power, sovereignty and dominion in respective contexts.

**Maidhyoi-Mâha Spitâma**: Fifteen-year senior cousin of Asho Zarathushtra who was the first to join Zarathushtra in his divine mission.

**Maga**: literally “magnanimity, generosity,” stands for the “World Fellowship” founded by Zarathushtra.

**Magavan**: is a member of the “Maga,” the Zarathushtrian World Fellowship. (see *maga*)

**Mainyu**: derived from *man*, “to think” with the instrumental suffix *yu*, means “means of thinking,” the faculty of thinking, mentality. It has been rendered as “mentality” and “mind.” (see *spenta mainyu*)

**Mazdâ**: literally “super-intellect, higher intelligence,” is one of the two names given to God by Zarathushtra. It is super-intellect personified for us to comprehend God. Mazda alone, or with Ahura as Ahura Mazda or Mazda Ahura as a loose compound, has been mentioned by Zarathushtra for 155 times in the Gathas. Ahura Mazda as a fixed compound is a later development for God. Mazda has been translated as “Wise” and “the Wise One.” It may be noted that while *Ahura* was retained from the old Aryan vocabulary for “god” or “God,”

Zarathushtra was the first person to use the abstract term of *mazda* to describe God in a highly befitting way as “The Super-Intellect.”

**Māñthra:** derived from *man*, “to think, to contemplate, to meditate” in its causative form of *mân*, “to provoke one to think, to help one to contemplate,” and the agentive suffix *-thra*, it means “a thought-provoking word, a stimulating message.” Asho Zarathushtra calls his divinely inspired universal message, composed as the *Gathas*, the Manthra.

**Māñthran:** is “the giver of the Manthra,” a thought-provoker. Zarathushtra calls himself and his companions the thought-provokers, God’s messengers who awaken and stimulate one’s mind and the thinking faculty, convey to him or her the divine message, and guide him or her to choose the right path as a free intellegent being. Manthran has all the meanings the terms “Prophet, the speaker of divinely inspired words” and “Teacher” could convey and more. It is more befitting to call Zarathushtra “The Manthran.”

**Primal Principles of Life (*dâtâ añheush pouruyehya*):** Asho Zarathushtra gives some twenty abstract terms to provide humanity with the basic principles of a progressive, beneficial and righteous life on this earth. Seven of them are more prominent. They are: *vohu manah*, good mind, *asha*, righteousness, *vohu khshathra*, good dominion, *âramaiti*, serenity, *serausha*, inspiration, and *haurvatat*, all led by *spenta mainyu*, the progressive mentality, toward *ameretât*, immortality. (see all these references).

**Ratu:** derived from *eret*, “to do right,” stands for a person “who offers good settlement, nourishment and strength” to the living world (Song 2.2). He is the righteous leader, worthy of being chosen to teach and lead mankind. *Ahu* and *ratu* are the twin offices held by Zarathushtra after his choice by the living world. I have rendered it as the “righteous leader.” (see *ahu*)

**Saoshyant:** literally “benefactor,” is a person who extraordinarily helps to promote the living world. He is a renovator. Zarathushtra is one of them.

**Seraosha** means “listening.” It stands for listening to the divine voice within us to guide us on the right path. It means inspiration, communion with God.

**Shoithra**, derived from *khshi*, “to settle,” is applied to a large tract of land composed of many settlements. It is the third geographical unit of human settlement. It has been rendered here as “district.” (see *demana*, *vis*, *dakhyu*, and *bumi*)

**Spenta:** derived from *spi*, “to increase, to progress,” it means “progressing” and “progressive.” Both God and the creation are *spenta*. Whereas we, and the good creation, are still evolving towards wholeness, God is *spenishta* and *spentotema*, the most progressive.

**Spenta Mainyu:** “the progressive mentality,” is the divine faculty which actively promotes the beneficial, evolutionary development or continuous creation and maintenance of both the material and mental, physical and spiritual universe. (see *mainyu*)

**Ushta:** derived from *ush*, “to shine,” means “enlightenment.” It stands for true health and happiness through enlightenment. Based on the Gathic conception (Song 8.1), I have rendered it as “radiant happiness” which would radiate health and happiness to others.

**Usig:** An old Aryan cult priestly family. The famous Rig Vedic rishi Kakshivat belonged to this family.

**Vâstar:** derived from *vas*, “to settle” and its causative form of *vâs*, “to settle others,” it literally means “one who settles and rehabilitates people,” and stands for Zarathushtra in the “Yatha Ahu” formula because, once chosen as the good lord and righteous leader of mankind, he rehabilitates the *drigu*, the oppressed deprived of their rights. I have rendered it as “Rehabilitator.”

**Vâstra:** a settlement. It is a term coined by Zarathushtra for his movement aimed at settling unproductive, parasitical, or nomadic peoples in an activated world-promoting Fellowship of a settled life.

**Vâstrya:** a settled person, one belonging to *vastra*, a productive settlement.

**Verezena:** literally an “enclosure,” it stands for “the community,” the second unit of world fellowship. (See *khvaetu*, family and *airyaman*, fellowship)

**Vis:** is “the settlement” formed by a number of *demanas*, homes. It is the second geographical unit of human settlement. (See *demana*, house, *shoithra*, district, *dakhyu*, land, and *bumi*, earth for the other four units)

**Vishtaspa, Kavi:** The famous sagacious prince who, contrary to other Kavi kings, joined Zarathushtra’s divine mission and with his family members, became the foremost patron of the Good Religion.

**Vohu Manah:** literally “good mind, good thinking,” is the first of “Primal Principles of Life.” It stands for the “wisdom” and clear thinking required for leading a righteous life.

**Yama** son of **Vivañhan**, a legendary figure in the Aryan lore, stands as the first leader of the Aryan migration from northern steppes towards southern lands, saves the community during the ice age, and suffers a fall because of his pride, arrogance, and declaring himself as the “god” of the world. He is known as King Jamshed/Jamshid in Iranian literature.

**Yasna**, derived from *yaz*, “to revere, to venerate, to esteem, to honor.” It means “veneration, true service.”



## ***English Renderings of Avestan Terms for Easy Reference:***

- Abode of Songs: see *Garo Demâna*.  
Benefactor: see *Shaoshyant*.  
Beneficent: see *Hudâ*.  
Communion: see *Seraosha*.  
Community: see *Verezena*.  
District: see *Shoithra*.  
Dominion: *Khshathra*.  
Earth: see *Bumi*.  
False gods: see *Daeva*.  
Family: see *Khaetu*.  
Fellowship: see *Airyaman, Maga*.  
God: see *Ahura*.  
gods: see *Daeva*.  
Good Conscience: *Daenâ Vañuhi*.  
Good Dominion: see *Khshathra (vohu)*.  
Good Mind: see *Vohu Manah*.  
Good Religion: see *Daenâ Vañuhi*.  
Happiness: see *Ushta*.  
Home: see *Demâna*.  
Immortality: see *Ameretât*.  
Inspiration: see *Seraosha*.  
Land: see *Dakhyu*.  
Leader: see *Ratu*.  
Life: see *Gaya*.  
Living World: see *Gaethâ, go*.  
Lord: see *Ahu, Ahura*.  
Message: see *Mâñthra*.  
Not-living: see *Ajyâiti*.  
Oppressed: *Drigu*.  
Power: see *Khshathra*.  
Precision: see *Asha*.  
Priest: see *Karapan*.  
Prince: see *Kavi*.  
Progressive Immortals: *Amesha Spenta*.  
Progressive Mentality: see *Spenta Mainyu*.  
Radiant happiness: see *Ushtâ*.  
Rehabilitator: see *Vâstar*.  
Righteous: see *Ashavan*.  
Righteousness: see *Asha*.  
Serenity: see *Aramaiti*.  
Settlement: see *Vis*.  
Sorting Bridge: see *Chivato Peretu*.  
Sovereignty: see *Khshathra*.  
Thought-provoker: see *Mâñtrhran*.  
Thought-provoking Message: see *Mâñthra*.  
Veneration: see *Yasna*.  
Wise: see *Mazda*.  
Wise One: see *Mazda*.  
Wholeness: see *Haurvatât*.  
World: see *gaetha, go*.  
Wrong: see *Druj*.  
Wrongful: see *Dregvant*.

## Appendix III

### *Yasna Equivalents*

*Ashem Vohu* Yasna 27.14      *Ahuna Vairya* 27.13

#### **Ahunavaiti Gatha**

Song 1	28	Song 2	29
Song 3	30	Song 4	31
Song 5	32	Song 6	33
Song 7	34		

#### **Ushtavaiti Gatha**

Song 8	43	Song 9	44
Song 10	45	Song 11	46

#### **Spenta Mainyu Gatha**

Song 12	47	Song 13	48
Song 14	49	Song 15	50

#### **Vohu Khshathra**

Song 16      51

#### **Vahishta Ishti**

Song 17      53      A Airyema Ishya      54.1

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