


# Devotion to Wisdom

Mazdayasna: the philosophy of Zarathushtra

# A Thought Catalyst

This deck is a brief compilation of work from several Mazdayasni scholars -- namely Dina McIntyre, Dr. Kaikhosrov Irani, and Dr. Ali Jafarey.

As Mazdayasna encourages each individual to think for oneself and utilize Good Mind (Vohu Manah) in search of the Ultimate Truth (Asha) - the goal of this brief compilation is to be a ***thought catalyst and spur discussion*** on improving our existence.

I hope you find it useful, wishing you radiant happiness  ushtā!

# Core Message



Zarathushtra teaches a system, a way of looking at our reality, a way of life that is timeless. In essence, he teaches:

1. that throughout our lives, we are confronted by choices;
2. that we should use our minds and hearts to search for the Truth, for what is right and good, in all aspects of our reality,
3. and choose it, with each thought, word, and action, by engaging the world, not rejecting it,
4. thereby perfecting our world and ourselves,
5. until we become one with the Divine, until we become a part of the "Endless Lights."

# Brief History



Zarathushtra called his teachings Daena Vanguhi meaning "Good Conscience". A little later, his disciples coined a new befitting term, Mazdayasna, meaning "Devotion to Wisdom". Mazdayasna is also known as Zoroastrianism and is one of the world's oldest continuously practiced religions. It is a spiritual philosophy **focused on improving existence through self-realization and realization of the Divine.**

Zarathushtra's teachings are captured in 17 songs called the Gathas. The Gathas are believed to be composed by Zarathushtra himself in an extinct Iranian language called Avestan. Avestan was not well understood until linguists decoded it in the 18th century after noticing similarities to Vedic Sanskrit.

Linguistic evidence dates the Gathas to ~1700 BCE, over 3,700 years ago! Zarathushtra was part of the Indo-Iranian tribes living in eastern Greater Iran - an area in between present day Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

Zoroastrian beliefs were prevalent during the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid Iranian empires that spanned from 550 BCE to 651 CE. Zoroastrians were severely persecuted following the Muslim invasion of the Sassanid Empire and the religion subsequently declined in prevalence over hundreds of years.

# Ultimate Truth: Goodness and Righteousness



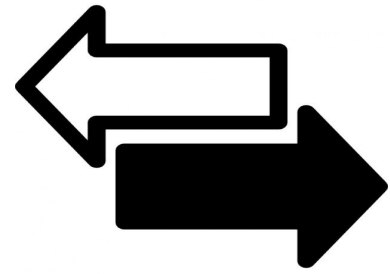
The Divine (Ahura Mazda) is the **source of all goodness** and Ahura Mazda conceived of a perfect existence, in purely ideal terms called Asha. Asha is translated literally as “truth” but this notion of truth is a very special one.

Asha means the totality of the vision of ideal existence. Truth is the relationship of all things in perfect harmony so that nothing occurs at the expense of something else. There is no friction in that existence.

Asha is the best good, the best existence, which also includes the notion of social justice. No one prospers at the cost of somebody's injury. **It is the Ultimate Truth: the perfect, true, entirely good order of existence.**

Zarathushtra urges us to seek the Truth in all aspects of existence: with our thoughts, words, and deeds. Acting in accordance with Truth is the best good and the right thing, hence it is also translated as Righteousness.

# Moral Vectors



Zarathushtra conceives of the world we live in as a theater of conflict between two diametrically opposed ways of being (mainyu), they stand for mental attitudes in the psychological domain, and also opposing moral vectors in all of creation.

The **Beneficial Way of Being (Spenta Mainyu) is the vector that promotes Asha** and the Destructive Way of Being (Angra Mainyu) is the one that moves away from Asha. This dualist moral doctrine was later translated as the struggle of “Good vs Evil” - but this struggle is one that occurs within the individual.

The universe is to be understood as a potentially ideal evolution in which there is the possibility of both the movement towards goodness but also the movement towards frustration. The **world is capable of being perfected by the actions of humans by reason of their capacity of moral choice.** Through Free Will, human action can promote good and reject evil leading to its ultimate banishment from the physical world.

Thus the importance of the threefold mantra: **Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds**

# Realization of the Divine



The Amesha Spenta are abstract concepts on which Zarathushtra's philosophy is constructed. They are aspects of Ahura Mazda, a **framework through which the Divine is known and realized**:

1. **Ultimate Truth** (Asha) - the highest form of goodness and righteousness, an entirely good and ideal existence
2. **Good Mind** (Vohu Manah) - the comprehension of Asha (Truth) and recognizing the disparity between the ideal and the real, it is the instrument of moral cognition
3. **Embodied Truth** (Spenta Armaity) - the embodiment of Truth through one's thoughts, words, and deeds - it is characterized by benevolence and ultimately results in serenity
4. **Good Rule** (Vohu Khshathra) - the rule of Truth, utilizing Good Mind and Embodied Truth to bring about the ideal progressive society through our collective thoughts, words, and deeds
5. **Completeness** (Haurvatat) - wholeness, the complete attainment of Truth, physical and spiritual integrity
6. **Non Deathness** (Ameretat) - the state of immortal bliss where we are no longer bound by mortal existence, we become one with the Divine, and part of the "Endless Lights" -- a metaphor for enlightenment

# The Nature of the Divine



Zarathushtra's name for the Divine, Ahura Mazda, is a way of revealing Its nature.

Ahura meaning “lord” is one who has mastered, and attained the power of, the Divine Aspects (Amesha Spenta) including non-deathness (Ameretat) and therefore also has **lordship over life and mortality**.

Mazda meaning “wisdom” is another word for enlightenment. **Realizing the Divine through the experience of thoughts, words and actions of Asha is wisdom** - so this is also the realization of the Divine Aspects.

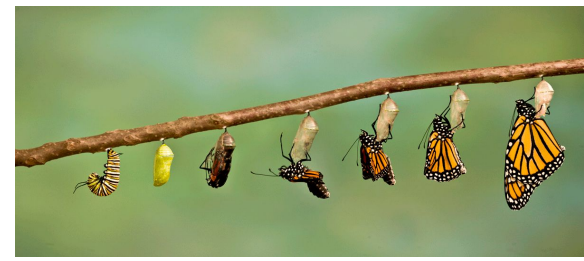
The Divine is both Ahura and Mazda which includes having both the ability and wisdom of the Divine Aspects, and also includes **helping others to attain them, so we can reach completeness** (Haurvatat).

Zarathushtra's innovation was that it wasn't **who** a being is that makes It Divine. It is **what** a being is, -- the quality of the being, the nature of the being -- that makes it Divine, worthy of worship. Worship through love, partnership, and embodiment -- which reinforces the importance of the Divine Aspects as a framework.

The Divine is beneficial, wholly good, it means to be enlightened and also to help others to become enlightened.



# Growth and Purpose



In the Gathas, the **purpose of life is to evolve or grow** from a conflicted state of being that is a mixture of harmful and more beneficial (Y45.2, Y30.3), **to a state of being that is completely, wholly, good and beneficial**. A state of being that personifies the Divine Aspects completely (Haurvatat).

Zarathushtra gives us **a way of looking at existence, a way of living, that is without fear**. The religions of his society were fear based (as are many religions today). One either obeyed or was punished. One either worshipped through extravagant gifts to the gods (through their priests, naturally), or one was punished. Natural calamities, sickness, poverty, suffering - all were supposedly 'punishments' from the god(s).

It was precisely this fear-based paradigm that Zarathushtra rejected -- seeing the **Divine as wholly good, wholly beneficial, a Friend, whose existence is the true order of existence** (Asha) -- the Ultimate Truth.

Mortal existence is the matrix that enables the experiences necessary for our evolution and growth to realize Asha and the Divine.

# Humankind and the Divine



In the Gathas, the relationship between the Divine and human beings is not authoritarian. It is not described as that of a master to a slave or servant, nor even a father to a child, but as **a friend to a friend, an ally, and a partner** (Y44.1, Y46.2, Y44.2).

The Amesha Spenta are a framework for realizing the Divine. And Zarathushtra says that **we can attain all these qualities**, completely, perfectly (Haurvatat), at which time we transcend mortality (Ameretat), because mortal existence is the matrix for this evolution.

Zarathushtra says “Therefore, may we be those who shall heal this world/existence” (Y30.9). So, each time you engage in a project -- however small -- that benefits other human beings, other life forms, our environment, **you are partnering with Wisdom in being a healer of existence.**

This supports **Zarathustra’s idea that humankind and God are part of the same Whole.** And that when we are perfectly whole, we become one with the Divine and part of the “Endless Lights”.

# Summary

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra teaches a practical, spiritual philosophy focused on improving existence through self-realization and realization of the Divine. To briefly summarize:

1. **Goodness & Truth** - the Divine is wholly good, beneficial, our friend and ally -- the Truth (Asha) is the ideal, perfect, and wholly good order of existence, the way existence should be
2. **Free Will & Growth** - human beings are free to choose, learn from our choices, and adjust -- we can grow and realize Truth through our collective thoughts, words, and deeds
3. **Realizing Wisdom** - all of the Divine Aspects (Amesha Spenta) are attainable by humankind as we seek to realize Truth and Wisdom, mortal existence is the matrix for this growth
4. **Healing Existence** - to realize Truth and Wisdom, we must heal all of existence -- we do this by actively engaging life and helping others to grow -- no one can do this on their own
5. **Completeness** - humankind and the Divine are parts of the same Whole, by progressing all existence to be entirely good we become completely whole, and transcend mortal existence

# Sources and Acknowledgements

This brief compilation brings together various works from:

- Dina G. McIntyre - [Gathas of Zarathushtra](#) and [CZC Seminar Liberating Zarathustra's Relevance](#)
- Dr. Kaikhosrov D. Irani - [Introduction to the Gathas](#) and [Zarathushtrian Philosophy](#)
- Dr. Ali A. Jafarey - <https://zoroastrian.org/articles/salient.htm>

With immense gratitude, I have learned so much from these amazing scholars 🙏

Wishing you all radiant happiness 🔥 ushtā!

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