

## Dina G. McIntyre - Buried Treasure

Suppose that you lived in a time period when there was no TV, no movies, and very few, if any, books. And suppose that you had some exciting ideas that you thought were really important, and you wanted to make sure these ideas survived you. What would you do? How would you go about making sure that these ideas survived? You might put them into songs that people could sing, or poems that people could recite, or you might put these ideas into the form of a story that people could pass down from one generation to another.

Zarathushtra, had some ideas he was excited about. And he used all of these devices. Today, it's not so easy for us to relate to his songs, because we no longer know the tunes to which they were sung. And it is not so easy for us to relate to his poetry, because most of us no longer know the language in which he composed his poems. But we still have some stories. And that is what I would like to talk about today. Stories tend to reflect the views or the mind-set of the period of time in which they were written, so some of the things they say might seem strange to us. In addition, with the passage of time, people sometimes forget the ideas behind the stories, especially when they no longer understand the language in which the stories were made up. So we tend to take the stories literally. And there are many people who think that that is exactly what we should do -- take these stories literally. And that's perfectly all right. If any of you prefer to take the stories literally, that is your prerogative. But you know the old saying: where there are two Zoroastrians, there are three different points of view. Well, I'd like to honor this tradition of diversity by showing you a different way of looking at a few of these stories. I'd like you to discover the ideas, the buried treasures, behind the images -- the ideas that Zarathushtra and others of our remote ancestors were so keen to have us remember.

Let's start with a story told by Zarathushtra himself in one of the Gathas, Yasna 29. The translation of the Gathas on which I rely is that of Professor Insler of Yale University and all quotations and references to the Gathas in this paper are to his translation. Yasna 29 is so exquisitely crafted, and so packed with ideas, that to do it justice we should devote a whole session to it. But for our purposes today, I will give you just a verbal sketch to show you its most basic idea.

Yasna 29 is cast in the form of a mini drama. Among the cast of characters is God himself the Wise Lord Ahura Mazda, and his cardinal attributes, truth (asha), good thinking (vohu mano), and his benevolent or holy spirit (spenta mainyu),<sup>1</sup> all of whom are personified in this poem. Naturally, one wonders why. Why does Zarathushtra personify truth, good thinking and the benevolent spirit if they are aspects of God's nature. The answer, I believe, has to do with Zarathushtra's attempt to project, in dramatic form, the message he wishes to convey, as you will see.

This mini drama opens with a complaint which is made to the Wise Lord, about the cruelty, violence and oppression which in those days was ravaging Zarathushtra's world. The Wise Lord's benevolent spirit, spenta mainyu, is troubled by this and asks truth if this is a true and correct way for things to be. But truth informs them that it does not have a solution. In other words, truth, by itself, has no way of solving the problem. Since man has been given the freedom to choose, truth cannot abolish evil by divine edict, as it were. So the Wise Lord turns to good thinking. He asks:

"...Who has (been found) by thee, good thinking, who might give these things to the mortals below?" (Y29.7).

Good thinking replies that it has found, not a man of worldly power, but a man of understanding, Zarathushtra, who has listened to the commandments of the divine forces, which are the amesha spenta, and who is prepared to give their message, the message of the amesha spenta to the world. Professor Insler explains the selection of good thinking in the following way.

"...good thinking recognized, in [its] selection of the understanding prophet ... that the eventual overthrow of deceit must depend on the growth of reason and understanding in mankind. Namely, a further show of strength in the world leads only to further antagonism, but the human condition can be elevated for the better by the exercise of good thinking."<sup>2</sup>

The moral of this drama, the idea that Zarathushtra was trying to convey to us through this story, is the recognition that God's promised solution to the problem of overcoming evil, are His divine forces, and the key to accessing His divine forces is good thinking, or reason and understanding.

Let's move along in time to a period more than 2,000 years after Zarathushtra, when a teacher of our religion, called Zad-sparam, made a collection of some Zoroastrian texts which were then in use, around 900 A.D.<sup>3</sup> This would have been after the fall of the Sassanian empire. Zad-sparam's original work was in Pahlavi. E.W. West made the translation that I will be using almost 100 years ago, so it may be a bit obsolete, but it's the only one I have. This time, I will read the story to you instead of paraphrasing it. I'll start at the part where Zarathushtra comes out of the Daitih river.<sup>4</sup> I have a feeling that there is an idea behind the use of the Daitih River, but I haven't figured it out yet. Now, as you listen to the story, see if you can look past the images to the ideas behind the images. And see if you recognize in this Zadsparam story any ideas we just came across in Yasna 29.

"8. When he [Zarathushtra] came up from the water, and put on his clothes, he then saw the archangel Vohumano in the form of a man, handsome, brilliant, and elegant, who wore his hair curve-tailed, because the curved tail is an indication of duality; who had put on and wore a dress like silk, than which there was no making anything superior, for it was light itself; and his height was nine times as much as that of Zaratusht.

9. He also inquired of Zaratusht thus: 'Who may thou be, and from whom of them mayst thou be? also what is mostly thy desire, and the endeavor of thy existence?' 10. And he replied thus: "I am Zaratusht of the Spitamas; among the existences righteousness is more my desire, and my wish is that I may become aware of the will of the sacred beings, [that is the amesha spenta], and may practise so much righteousness as they exhibit to me in the pure existence."

11. And Vohumano directed Zaratusht thus: 'Do thou proceed to an assembly of the spirits!' 12. As much as Vohumano walked on in nine steps, Zaratusht did in ninety steps, and when he had gone ninety steps farther than him, he saw the assembly of the seven archangels [that is the amesha spenta]. 13. When he came within twenty-four feet of the archangels, he then did not see his own shadow on the ground, on account of the great brilliancy of the archangels; the position of the assembly was in Iran, and in the direction of the districts on the bank of the water of the Daitih. 14. Zaratusht offered homage, and spoke thus: 'Homage to Auharmazd, and homage to the archangels!' and he went forward and sat down in the seat of the enquirers.

15. As to the asking of questions by Zaratusht, he enquired of Auharmazd thus: 'In the embodied world [that is the material world] which is the first of the perfect ones, which the second, and which the third?' 16. And Auharmazd replied thus: 'The first perfection is good thoughts, the second good words, and the third good deeds.'

17. Zaratusht also enquired thus: 'Which thing is good, which is better, and which is the best of all habits?' 18. And Auharmazd replied thus: 'The title of the archangels is good, the sight of them is better, and the carrying out their commands is the best of all habits.' "

Let's break off here and look for some of the buried treasures -- the ideas behind the images. Let's start at the end, instead of the beginning.

Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda "Which thing is good, which is better, and which is the best of all habits?" Ahura Mazda replied: "The title of the archangels is good". Now, we know from later in the story that the archangels referred to here are the amesha spenta, God's attributes. But what does Ahura Mazda mean by "the title of the archangels is good"? I think he meant their names -- good thinking or a good mind vohu mano; truth and right asha; good rule, in the Gathas it is called the rule of truth and good thinking vohu xshathra; loving service or devotion to God and His good rule) spenta aramaiti; completeness or perfection, haurvatat; and immortality, ameretat.

Spenta mainyu God's benevolent spirit is not specifically mentioned in this story as one of the attributes, although in the Gathas, spenta mainyu is very clearly one of God's divine attributes. In this story the reference to the "assembly of the seven archangels" includes Ahura Mazda himself as one of the seven.

So the story tells us that the names, or the concepts, of these divine attributes are good. Then Ahura Mazda says "The sight of them is better". What does he mean by that? I think by "the sight of them" He means to perceive (or understand) what their names mean. In other words, these concepts are good. Understanding these concepts or ideas is better.

Finally Ahura Mazda says "And carrying out their commands is the best of all habits." What are the commands of the amesha spenta?

The command of truth and right is to be truthful and do what's right;

The command of good thinking is good thinking -- use your mind to discover and advance what's true and right;

The command of good rule, is to use your power for good,

The command of loving service or devotion is to bring to life God's good rule with our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

This is how we perfect our world, and ourselves and attain immortality.

This idea of how we perfect ourselves ties in to the first question Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: He asked: "In the embodied world [i.e. the material world] which is the first of the perfect ones, which the second, and which the third?" And Ahura Mazda answered: "The first perfection is good thoughts, the second good words, and the third good deeds."

69This is an important point. It tells us that in our religion, we do not attain spiritual perfection by withdrawing from the world. Our religion requires us to attain spiritual perfection by getting involved in our world, by thinking, speaking and acting in a way that promotes the truth and what's right.

Let's move to the start of the story -- the description of Vohu Mano. In the story, Zarathushtra sees him in the form of a man -- that's the image. What is the idea behind the image, what does Vohu Mano mean? Good thinking, or a good mind. So the story uses the form of a man to represent an idea -- good thinking. And we are told that this Good Thinking is "handsome, brilliant and elegant." indicating that good thinking is something desirable and attractive. The story then says that this person Good Thinking "wore his hair curve-tailed, because the curved tail is an indication of duality;" What do you suppose he meant by that? It could be knowledge of good and evil, (not good and evil itself, because good thinking is all good) or it could perhaps be the duality of the material and the spiritual.

Then we are told that Good Thinking's dress was not only "like silk," but that "it was light itself". What idea was the author trying to convey by telling us that Good Thinking was clothed in light? The expression "I'm in the dark" means "I don't understand, or I don't know." When a cartoon character has a light bulb in his speech/thought balloon, that conveys to us that he sees the light, or he understands, he knows. Similarly, when Zad-Sparam says Good Thinking was clothed in light, he is telling us that Good Thinking illuminates. It makes things clear to us.

Now we come to the most important part of the message or idea this story was intended to convey. What was it that led Zarathushtra to God and his divine attributes? Good thinking.

The moral of this story in a nutshell, is that good thinking, or a good mind, leads us to God. It helps us to understand the nature of God's divine attributes. In other words, it helps us to access the solution for defeating evil. The solution for defeating evil is God's divine attributes -- truth and right, good thinking, the benevolent use of power, loving service or devotion to the rule of truth and good thinking, completeness and immortality. Good thinking helps us to understand this solution, and then it is up to us to bring these divine values to life in our world with our thoughts, with our words and with our actions. The message of this story from Zad-Sparam is not much different from the message of the Gathas in Yasna 29, which says that the solution to the problem of evil is God's divine attributes, and the key to accessing them is good thinking.

We are used to thinking of angels or archangels as fluffy messengers with wings. But the Zad-sparam story shows us angels in a new light. It tells us that God communicates with us, not through people with wings who fly through the air, but through good thinking. His angels are His thoughts. His angels are his own divine values. That's rather a neat idea.

Our last story is taken from a Pazand work called the Mainyo-i-khard,<sup>5</sup> as translated into English by E.W. West in about 1871.<sup>6</sup> We don't know who the author of the original work was, nor do we know when the original work was written, but my friend Farrokh Vajifdar of London, England, tells me that Pazand was a language of the later Sassanian empire, so that would put it at around 550 to 600 A.D. -- More than 2,000 years after Zarathushtra. I do not know Pazand (I am sad to say). But Farrokh Vajifdar was kind enough to translate for me some of the Pazand words which E.W. West left untranslated. In addition, West translates the word "asho" as "pious". However, "asho" derives from *asha*, and today most people would translate "asho" as "truthful", or "righteous" so wherever the word "asho" appears, I have substituted the word "truthful" for "pious". Finally, I must tell you that our knowledge of Pazand, today, is far from complete. So there are some words I won't be able to translate, but I'll do the best I can.

The Mainyo-i-khard is an interesting work. Quite apart from the story which I am going to tell you, it has some neat proverbs or sayings. For example, it says:

"102 Be not reliant on much treasure and wealth; 103 since in the end, it is necessary for thee to leave all. 104 Be not reliant on monarchy; 105 since in the end, it is necessary for thee to be without a king."7

This could apply to any authority figure -- priests, parents, -- in the end, we have to think for ourselves. Another interesting saying in the Mainyo-i-Khard is:

"108. Be not reliant on kindred and great ancestry; 109 since in the end, dependence is on one's own deeds."8

But let's leave the interesting sayings, and get back to our story. I will read you a story from this Mainyo-i-Khard about what happens to the soul after death. Like most stories, it contains some local ideas of that time, but it also contains some universal ideas, which you may find worthwhile. Once again, as I read the story, look past the images to the ideas behind them.

The story takes place at the Chandor bridge. In Avestan, it is called the Chinvat bridge. Chandor is the Pazand word. This bridge is said to stretch from the material world to the spiritual world. Now, if you look behind the image of the bridge, what idea does it convey to you. To me, the image of the bridge stands for a transition from the material to the spiritual. In making this transition, we are told, the soul is evaluated, or judged. And this story is about how that transition and judgment takes place. This is how the story goes.

"115 In the dawn of the fourth day, with the assistance of Srosh the [truthful], and Vae the good, and Vahram the powerful, and [with] the opposition of Ast-vahad, and Vae the bad, and Frehzist the demon, and Nizist the demon, and the evil-disposed action of [Khashm], the evil-doing destroyer, it [the soul]proceeds up to the dreadful, lofty Chandor bridge, to which everyone, [truthful] and wicked, is coming.

116 And many antagonists arise there;

117 in ill will, [Khashm], the destroyer, and Ast-vahad who devours every creature, and knows no satiety;

118 and in mediation, Mihir, and Srosh and Rashn,

119 and in weighing, Rashn the just, 120 who makes no unjust balance of the spirits on either side, neither for the [truthful] nor yet the wicked, neither for lords nor yet rulers, 121 as much as a hair's breadth he will not vary, and he shows no favor; 122 and that one who is a lord and ruler, with that one who is the humblest man, he considers alike with impartiality.

123 And when the soul of the [truthful] passes over that bridge, the width of that bridge becomes about one league; 124 and that which is a soul of the [truthful] will pass over, with the assistance of Srosh the [truthful];

125 and that which is his own good deeds, comes to a meeting with him in the form of a damsel, 126 who is more beautiful and good than every damsel who is in the world; 127 and that which is a soul of the [truthful] speaks 128 thus:

'Who mayst thou be? that a damsel who is more beautiful and good than thee, was never seen by me in the world?'

129 In reply, that damsel's form answers 130 thus: 'I am not a damsel, but I am thy good deeds, O youth who are well-thinking, well-speaking, well-doing, of good religion.

'131 Since when thou sawest in the world the performance of idolatry, then thou hast abstained, and thy performance was the worship of God;

'132 and when by thee it was seen, that there was anyone who was causing oppression and violence, and distressing and overbearing a good man, and acquiring wealth by crime, then thou keptest back from creatures their own affliction and injury;

133 and by thee the good man was cared for, and lodging and entertainment provided, and by thee alms were given to him 134 who came up from near and who was also from far;

'and likewise thy wealth was acquired through honesty.

'135 And when thou sawest that there was the practice of false justice, and also of bribe-taking, and the giving of false evidence for it, then thou hast abstained, and thy speaking was true and proper discourse.

'136 Lo! I am this of thee, the good thoughts, and good words, and good deeds, that were thought, and spoken and done by thee; 137 for if I have become honored, then by thee I shall be made more honored; 138 and if I have become excellent, then by thee I shall be made more excellent; 139 and if I have become splendid, then by thee I shall be made more splendid.' "9

The story goes on to say that a damsel who is vile meets an evil soul and hideous that insults and abuses him, and tells him that she is not a damsel but his evil deeds. Let's break off at this point and look for the ideas that this story was created to transmit.

We start with the idea that the story is about the transition from the material world to the spiritual world, the transition being represented by the bridge. And at this point of transition a judgment is made as to whether the soul can make the transition to the good spiritual world.

What assists a soul to make this transition from the material to the spiritual. We are told that Srosh, Vae the good and Vahram assist it. "Srosh" means listening to God's word, or thinking obedience to God's word, Vae the good. I am not sure what Vae means. In the glossary, E.W. West tells us that it means a bird. Farrokh Vajifdar is of the opinion that "Vae the good" is a gentle zephyr, a good breeze. But whatever it means, it's a symbol of something good. Vahram means the victory of goodness or victory of good over evil. So if we look past the images, we see that listening to God's word, goodness and the victory of good over evil helps us to make the transition from the material to the spiritual.

And what opposes this transition: We are told, Ast-vahad, Vae the bad, the demons Frehzist and Nizist, and Khashm the destroyer.

Ast-vahad, I am not sure what ast-vahad signifies,

Vae the bad, a symbol of evil (a bad bird, according to West; a bad cold wind, according to Farrokh Vajifdar).

Frehzist means the opposite of moderation, extremes, like greed,

Nizist means what retards progress

Khashm means anger

So in essence, our transition from the material to the spiritual is opposed by evil, by extremes or a lack of moderation, by destructive anger, and by actions that retard progress.

Now as the soul approaches the bridge (or the transition), we are told that certain things speak in mediation, or in favor of the soul, these are:

Mihir, which means friendship, kindness,

Srosh, which is listening or obedience to the word of God, and

Rashn, which is right judgment or justice.

In the story we get the impression that Mihir, Srosh and Rashn are persons. But if you look to the meanings of their names, the idea comes through that if the soul has been friendly, kind, loving (Mihir), obedient to the word of God (Srosh), and has used good judgment, or has been a just person, (Rashn), these virtues weigh in the soul's favor in determining whether it is able to make the transition to the good spiritual world.

Next we come to the making of the decision or judgment itself. We are told that the soul is weighed by Rashn. Rashn means right judgment or justice. If you look past the image of the person doing the weighing, to the meaning of his name, you get the idea that the soul is evaluated, or weighed, with perfect justice. Regardless of whether the soul is that of someone who is rich and powerful, or poor and humble, the determination is made without favoritism of any kind, with perfect justice.

And now we come to one of the most interesting parts of the story. When the soul is at the bridge, or at the point of transition, he is confronted by his own conduct, which appears beautiful or ugly to him, depending on whether he has been good or bad. And this is what is so interesting: to whom does the person's conduct appear beautiful or ugly? Not to a third party. The story does not say that the damsel representing the person's conduct, appears beautiful or ugly to Rashn, or to some other person. It appears beautiful or ugly to the soul itself. I could be wrong, but to me, the idea that comes through is the idea of self-judgment. The soul judges itself.<sup>10</sup> If that is true, this concept of self-judgment is a most unusual idea. And I immediately searched through the Gathas to see if there was any hint of it there. I found one passage which seems to corroborate this idea of self-judgment. In Yasna 46 verse 11, Zarathushtra says:

"During their regimes, the Karpans [a type of priest] and the Kavis [princes] yoked (us) with evil actions in order to destroy the world and mankind. But their own soul and their own conception did vex them when they reached the Bridge of the Judge, (there) to become guests in the House of Deceit..." (Y46.11)

So the concept of self-judgment, of a person's own soul vexing him at the Bridge of the Judge is there. In the Gathas, although Zarathushtra does not talk of the beautiful damsel, he does speak of how the transition is made from the material to the good spiritual existence. He expresses his ideas differently in some respects from the story in the Mainyo-i-Khard. In the Gathas, Zarathushtra says that the transition is made by those people who have brought about truth for truth's own sake, and the rule of good thinking. He says:

"Wise Lord, whoever -- be it man or woman -- would grant to me those things which Thou dost know to be the best for existence, namely, the truth for the truth and the rule of good thinking, (with that person) as well as those whom I shall accompany in the glory of your kind -- with all these I shall cross over the Bridge of the Judge." (Y46.10).

Does this mean that the story in the Mainyo-i-Khard is wrong when it says that it is friendship or kindness, goodness and victory over evil which helps a person to make the transition? Not at all. They are just different ways of saying the same thing. Goodness and Victory over evil is just another way of saying "Truth for the truth, and the rule of good thinking", and in the Gathas, the relationship between man and God is described, more than once, as that of a friend to a friend, or a beloved to a beloved. Just as God is friends with us, so we must be friends with each other. In other words, both the Gathas and the Mainyo-i-Khard story tell us that we have to acquire God's characteristics, His values, in order to make the transition from the material to the spiritual.

There is one respect in which the Mainyo-i-Khard and other Zoroastrian literature is very different from the Gathas, and that is in their ideas of heaven and hell.

In the later literature Heaven and Hell are physical locations to which we go after we die. Heaven has many levels, each one more wonderful than the last. And hell is a place in which the "bad" endure unspeakable agony and torture. This just doesn't make sense to me. It makes no sense, that on the one hand God should create man fallible, and then punish him in hell for behaving in the very way in which he was created -- fallible. Nor does the very idea of hell make much sense to me. What is to be gained by subjecting a person to pure agony, as hell is said to be. Does he learn anything from it? Does his agony in hell undo the wrong he did? What purpose does the hell of the later literature serve? I have found none that satisfies me. To me, the conventional ideas of heaven and hell, as described in the later Zoroastrian literature, seem to be an attempt to control human behavior with bribery and fear -- they bribe us into being good with the promise of going to heaven. And they scare the daylights out of us (or try to) with the idea that if we are bad we will suffer the agonies of hell.

Somehow, I just cannot buy the idea that bribery, fear, and torture can be any part of the reality of the wise and loving God who fills our lives with so much beauty and meaning. Look at our Ashem Vohu prayer. What does it say. Its basic premise is that we pursue truth for truth's own sake -- a premise that we also find in the Gathas -- no bribery, no terror, just the pursuit of truth for truth's own sake. I like that. In the Gathas, we find an idea of heaven and hell that is quite different from that of the later Zoroastrian literature. In the Gathas Zarathushtra implies that the rewards for good and bad conduct are states of being.

When I speak of "evil" I am not referring to natural disasters, illness, poverty, etc. In the Gathas, Zarathushtra does not explicitly define "evil", but if you look at each description of evil, you will see that it refers to the product of wrongful choices. So when I speak of evil, here, I am referring to the product of wrongful choices. In the Gathas,

Zarathushtra refers to what Taraporewalla calls the law of action and reaction. I like to call it the law of consequences. In essence, Zarathushtra teaches that everything we do comes back to us. The good we do comes back to us. The bad we do come back to us. It is part of the law of asha. What fits? Perfect justice. If we lie, cheat, steal, hurt other people, all those actions will come back to us. So we literally create our own hells by the bad things we do. As I understand it, and I could be wrong, this is not a matter of revenge or punishment. Rather, it is a matter of enlightenment. If you harm someone, and if, at some later time and place, you find yourself on the receiving end of that same kind of harm, it helps you to understand how wrong that kind of action is. Does that mean that when we see someone suffering we should just sit back and say: "They must have deserved it. They are undergoing a learning experience" Not at all. It is clear that in this life, "bad" things also happen to good people. Why this is so, I do not know, unless perhaps it is a part of the soul refining process -- the refiner's fire. But regardless of why a person suffers, it is not for us to judge what others do or do not deserve. Our part is to act to right the wrong, with good thinking (vohu mano), and with the courage, compassion and generosity of a benevolent spirit (spenta mainyu). We can help each other work through the bitter medicine of the law of consequences, or the pain of the refiner's fire with the healing effects of God's divine forces.

The Gathas don't describe a "hell" of tortures and agony. The consequences of bad actions are described as: "the worst existence" (Y30.4). We are told that bad people "retreat from good thinking and disappear from the will of the Wise Lord and from truth." (Y32.4), that the consequences of bad actions is living in the "House of Deceit" which I take to mean, living in a condition of false illusions and ignorance. In the Gathas we are told that hell is being away from God's approval.

"...the deceitful man shall have his share apart from Thy approval...." (Y47.5).

Zarathushtra also says that the consequences of evil are:

"a long lifetime of darkness, foul food, ... woe [unhappiness]...." (Y31.20),

I think he uses "darkness" and "foul food" in a metaphoric sense, as images. The ideas behind the images are that darkness is a state of ignorance, and just as foul food is bad for the body, the vices of a person are bad nourishment for his soul.

The Heaven of the Gathas is also a state of being. It is the state of being that results when we have achieved completely, or when we have perfected in ourselves, God's characteristics. In effect when we are one with God. Zarathushtra refers to heaven as "the best thinking" (Y30.4), and as "the House of Good Thinking" and "the House of Song". In my opinion, he uses the word "House" as a metaphor or image for a state of being. The idea behind the image is a state of being. This conclusion may be inferred from a number of verses. For example, in Y33.5 Zarathushtra speaks of:

"...the...rule of good thinking and the paths, straight in accord with truth, wherein the Wise Lord dwells." (Y33.4)

Clearly, "dwells" here does not refer to a physical location where the Wise Lord lives. He could "dwell" in the rule of good thinking and the paths of truth only in a metaphoric sense, indicating His condition or state of being. Similarly, in another part of the Gathas, Zarathushtra refers indirectly to the divine values as existing in the House of Song (50.4). If these divine values are attributes of God, then the "house" in which they live can only be His state of being.<sup>11</sup> Thus the House of Good Thinking would be a state of perfect wisdom, and the House of Song, a state of bliss.

In short, Zarathushtra's paradise is divinity. It is a state of being. It is what we become when we have achieved completely, God's divine values. It is the bliss of rejoining the source, of being one with God. Completeness (haurvatat). It is not a place to which we go when we die. It is within. Rabindranath Tagore, with his poet's insight, expressed the same truth in this way. He said:

"Oh brother,  
Do you know where heaven is?  
It has no beginning, it has no end,  
Nor is it any country..."

In my heart Heaven finds her home,  
And in my songs her melodies." Rabindranath Tagore, A Flight of Swans,

(Poems from Balaka, No. 24, translated from the Bengali by Aurobindo Bose).

1 Spenta mainyu is not referred to in this Yasna by that name. Rather it is referred to as "the fashioner of the cow" [the "cow" in the Gathas is a metaphoric reference to the good vision, the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking]. However, the "fashioner of the cow" is identified as the benevolent spirit of the Wise Lord in other verses of the Gathas. For example:

"Thou art the virtuous Father of this spirit, the spirit who fashioned the joy-bringing cow [good vision] for this world....." Y47.3.

"Thou, Wise One, who hast fashioned the cow [good vision] ..... by reason of Thy most virtuous spirit, ....." Y51.7.

2 Insler, The Gathas of Zarathushtra, at page 139.

3 Sacred Books of the East, Volume 47, page 133, footnote 1. This translation may be a bit obsolete. It was made in or before 1897. Unfortunately, it is one of the few authoritative translations that we have.

4 Sacred Books of the East, Volume 47, pages 156 to 157.

5 According to Mr. West, the term "mainyo-i-khard" means "the spirit of wisdom" or [better yet] "the spiritual (existence) which (is) wisdom." The term "mino-khirad" is the later Persian form of the Pazand term "mainyo-i-khard" The Book of the Mainyo-i-Khard, Introduction, page ii.

6 The Book of the Mainyo-i-Khard, E.W. West translation of the Pazand and Sanskrit texts as arranged in the Fifteenth Century by Neriosengh Dhaval, (APA-Oriental Press, Amsterdam, 1979 Reprint).

7 The Book of the Mainyo-i-Khard, page 133.

8 The Book of the Mainyo-i-Khard, page 133.

9 The Book of the Mainyo-i-Khard, pages 133-134.

10 One might question, if the soul is not perfect, how can it judge itself so perfectly. The Gathas imply that something of God -- His benevolent spirit, His Good Mind, lives in each one of us. I speculate that it is this part of divinity that exists in each of us, that does the judging. Perhaps this concept of the in-dwelling God was later turned into the concept of the fravashi. I do not know.

11 See also Y31.4 in conjunction with Y46.14, and 51.22.