

CLEAR DESCRIPTIONS OF SOME FORCES OF GOD IN THE AVESTA

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The first among these is the name of Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord.

Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd in the later texts) meaning the Wise Lord, is the name given to God by the Zoroastrians. As his name implies, he is characterised by Wisdom – undeceived and undeceiving, the Lord is bounteous and perfect goodness. The mother and father of creation, he made the paths of the sun, moon and stars. He was, is and will be; in other words he is eternal, but at the present time he is not omnipotent for he is limited by his archenemy, the Evil Spirit. The time will come, however, when evil will be overcome and Ahura Mazda will reign omnipotent.

The terms in which Ohrmazd is described are often naturalistic. He wears a star-decked robe. His fairest forms are the sun on high and the light on earth: the 'swift-horsed sun' is said to be his eye. His throne is in the highest heaven, in celestial light. There he holds court and ministers angels carrying out his commands. Although this symbolism may have been taken literally by many, this must not be supposed to be the case for all Zoroastrians. Much of the mythology has, as we shall see, an abstract character.

To a Zoroastrian, Ohrmazd is above all perfect goodness – he has no association with evil. Zoroastrians condemn the Christian god as evil for he allows his creation, and even his own son, to suffer. Suffering is regarded as evil for it spoils the Good Creation; it is something that God can not yet control, but which he will one day defeat. God is the source of all that is good: light, life, beauty, joy, health. He is the power behind every throne, the inspiration of all that is true and whose earthly symbol is the righteous man. The second group of the Forces of Good are the Amesha Spentas.

The Amesha Spentas (sons and daughters of God)

The word Ameshaspand or Amesha Spenta, is a triple compound. The first portion is the negative prefix and the second mesha means man or mortal and is so used in the Gathas themselves. The third portion is spenta (of which the Sanskrit equivalent is Svant) which means benevolent but which should be translated as holy in this phrase. Thus the word Ameshaspand means "The Holy Immortal".

Zoroaster spoke of seven beings or 'aspects' of God which he had created by an act of will. They are Spenta Mainyu, Vohu Mana, Asha, Kshathra Vairya, Armaiti Haurvatat and Ameretat, or to give them their English form, the Bounteous Spirit, the Good Mind, Truth, the Desired Kingdom, Devotion, Integrity and Immortality.

The essential characteristic of God is the Bounteous or Creative Spirit. This belongs to God alone but the other aspects are facets of God in which man can share: they are the means by which God approaches man and man approaches God. So Zoroaster declares that whoever gives heed to Ahura Mazda and obeys him will attain Integrity and Immortality through the deeds of the Good Mind (Ys.45:5). It is through the Good Mind that men follow the paths of Truth, gain Integrity and Immortality and thereby attain the Kingdom. Man can thus share in the nature of God; indeed, his religious duty is to be united with his ultimate source or creator.

There has been much scholarly debate over the origin of these 'aspects'. Some believe that the figures are based on ancient gods, but whatever their source, what matters most is an appreciation of the high ideals and the profound thought that they embody. In later Zoroastrianism much more picture imagery is used in association with these figures, who have been compared with the archangels of Christianity.

Ahura Mazda as incorporating Spenta-Mainyu is put at the head of the Ameshaspands making the number seven, a number which from ancient times is considered to be an auspicious one.

Each one of these angels in the spiritual world represents one of the divine attributes of Ahura Mazda, whilst in the material world they are delegated to the protection of one or the other of the

elements or objects of creation Bahman who is the personification of the Holy Thought, the Good Mind and the divine Wisdom of Ahura Mazda, and is, in this world, the protector of all useful animals. Ardibehesht who, in the spiritual world, represents the Spirit of Truth and Righteousness of the Creator, is in the material world the protector of the element of Fire. Shehrivar is the personification of the Spiritual power and Sovereignty of the Almighty, whilst, in the material world he is described to be in charge of the metallic elements. Spendarmad, the personification of divine Love and Devotion, is entrusted with the care of the earth in this world. Khordad and Amardad, the personifications of the spirit of Perfection and Immortality respectively, are the protectors of the element of water and of the vegetable kingdom. Man stands under the protection of Ahura Mazda himself. The Immortals all play such an important part in Zoroastrian belief that each of them is worth looking at individually.

Vohu Manah (Good Mind)

Vohumanah is compounded of Vohu and Manah meaning the Good Mind. The Persian word khub and the Avestan Vohu are one and the same. The Persian Manah are also the same. The word Vohumanah also connotes a pure nature and a good disposition. The expression Vohumanah or Vahishto-manah with the same meaning is used 130 times in the Gathas.

Vohu Manah, the first-born of God, sits at the right hand of Ahura Mazda and acts almost as adviser. Although he protects useful animals in the world, he nevertheless deals with men as well. It is Vohu Manah who keeps a daily record of men's thoughts, words and deeds. Good Mind as the personification of God's wisdom, working in man and leading man to God, for it is through the Good Mind that the knowledge of the Good Religion is attained. The demons to whom he is opposed are Aeshma (Wrath) and Az (Wrong, Mindedness), but above all Akah Manah (Vile Thoughts or Discord).

Asha (truth)

The word Asha which represents Truth, Righteousness and Divine Law and Order is mentioned 180 times in the Gathas. The word Asho is derived from the same root. Asha is the most beautiful of the Immortals. The believer is called an ashavan, a follower of Asha. Those who do not know Asha forfeit heaven are outside the whole order of God. Asha preserves order on earth for he smites disease, death, fiends, sorcerers and vile creatures – all who contravene the order of the world which God wills. Asha even preserves order in hell by seeing that the demons do not punish the wicked more than they deserve. His chief opponent is Indra, who represents the Spirit of Apostasy, for apostasy is what draws men away from the law and order of God.

Kshathra Vairya (the Desired Kingdom)

Kshathra means Kingdom or Sovereignty or Power. The Persian word shehr meaning city and the word shehriar meaning king are both derived from khashthra. In ancient times a much wider meaning was given to the word Shehr and it meant a kingdom or a country, e.g., Iran-Shahr meant the kingdom of Iran. Kshathra is the personification of God's might, majesty, dominion and power. In the celestial world this represents the kingdom of heaven, and on earth the kingdom which establishes God's will on earth by helping the poor and weak and by overcoming all evil. His particular opponent is Saura, the arch-demon of Misgovernment, Anarchy and Drunkenness.

Armaiti (Devotion)

Armaiti means Patience, Humility, Devotion and Love. Armaiti is the daughter of Ahura Mazda and sits at his left hand. As she presides over the earth she is said to give pasture to the cattle.

Armaiti is the personification of faithful obedience, religious harmony and worship. She is distressed when robbers, evil men and disrespectful wives walk free, but she rejoices when the righteous cultivate the land and rear cattle, or when a righteous son is born. Her particular opponents are Taromaiti (Presumption) and Pairimaiti (Crooked-Mindedness).

Haurvatat (Integrity)

Haurvatat meaning wholeness, totality or fullness (often translated as integrity), is the personification of what salvation means to the individual.

Ameretat (Immortality)

Ameretat is compounded of the negative sign “a” and Meretat (death), meaning together deathlessness or immortal.

These two feminine beings-Haurvatat and Ameretat are always mentioned together in the texts and they are associated with water and vegetation, their gifts are wealth and herds of cattle and so, they represent the ideals of vigour, the sources of life and growth. Their particular opponents are Hunger and Thirst.

These words have today changed their forms into Ordibehesht, Bahman, Shahrivar, Esfand, Khordad, and Mordad, which have become six months of the present Iranian calendar. Besides, as in olden times, among the Zoroastrians these six words also denote six out of the 30 days of the month.

Х ц л а с я

АВЕСТАДА ИЛАЩИ ЭЦЪЛЯРИН АЙДЫН ТЯСИРИ

Йунис ВЯЩДЯТИ
(Тябриз, Иран)

Мягаладя атяшпрястликля, йяни Авестада бящс олунан хейирхашц илащи эцъляр тядгиг олунур. Авестада Ащурамязданын юзцндян ялавя, даща 6 хейир кюмякчиляриндян бящс олунур. Хейир кюмякчиляри шяр кюмякчиляриня зиддирляр вя онларла даим мцбаризя апарырлар. Бунлар Спентя Мйинун, Вощу Мяня, Яшя, Хшясря Вйирйя, Армяити Щурвятат вя Амеретатдыр.

Бу тядгигат иши мцасир фарс дилинин етимоложи, морфоложи вя мяна ъящятдян аращдырылмасы бахымындан чох ящямиййятлидир.