

The significance and philosophy of the Vendidad

Ervad Marzban J. Hathiram

General introduction

The common term for the scriptures of the Zoroastrians and the Parsees is *Avesta*¹. The language in which the scriptures are composed is also called Avesta. The entire scripture was encompassed in 21 mega volumes called *Nasks* – collections. Each of these 21 volumes was named after each word of the most sacred chant of the Avesta – the 21-word prayer the *Ahuna Vairya* – The Will of the Lord. The original Avesta was transcribed by the disciples of the Prophet Zarathushtra² onto several thousand ox hides, written in golden ink. The original was stored in the *Ganj-i-Shaspikan* ‘the treasury of the kings’, and one copy was made and stored in the *Diz-i-Nipisht* ‘the fortress of writing’³. In addition to this written scripture there existed a strong oral tradition, where each Nask was orally passed down from generation to generation through specific families of priests.

When Alexander invaded the palace city of Persepolis in 330 BCE⁴, he destroyed these writings, which were deposited in the library there. Several of the priestly families were also massacred. The Parthian emperor Vologeses I (Valkash I, 51-77 CE) ordered that the scattered fragments be collected and re-made. The oral tradition was also rejuvenated to some extent. These efforts continued and reached a pinnacle during the reign of the Sassanian emperor Artakshir Papakan (226-241 CE) when the Zoroastrian High Priest Dastur Tansar finished the collation and produced the standard 21 Nasks once again.

These Avesta Nasks were then translated into *Pahlavi*⁵ – the common language of those times, during the reign of Shahpur I (309-379 CE), and *zand* - commentaries were added thereto during the reign of Khusro I (531-579 CE). Hence we get the common, but erroneous term *Zand-Avesta*. This monumental effort was again laid to waste when the Arabs invaded and conquered Iran (641 CE). Even after this catastrophe, efforts were made to collate the scriptures again. This resulted in the production of the mammoth Pahlavi work – The *Denkard*. The compilation of this encyclopaedia of Zoroastrianism was commenced by Atarfarnbag Farrokhzad and

was completed by Aturpat Hemed in the later part of the 9th century. The Denkard, besides containing numerous admonitions and ethical thoughts, and a comprehensive description of the life and times of Prophet Zarathushtra, also contained an exhaustive summary of 19 of the 21 Nasks, thereby indicating that some part of this treasure existed even after the Arab conquest. The Zoroastrian Diaspora to India in the 8th century⁶ resulted in further losses. Thus through these two calamities and the ravages and the passage of time, the entire scripture has been reduced today to just 1 complete Nask, and several fragments. The remaining Nask is the 19th of the 21 Nasks and is known in the Avesta as *Vi-daeva-data*, and in Pahlavi as *Vendidad*.

One of the most vital reasons for the survival of the Vendidad has been its central place in Zoroastrian liturgy. The most intricate of the inner liturgical ceremonies require the Vendidad to be recited in an interesting way, woven with the other important ritual scriptures of the *Yasna* and the *Vispered*. In this manner, not only was there a strong oral tradition but also several handwritten manuscripts of priestly families. Since the recitation of the Vendidad begins only after a quarter of the main ritual is performed, even the loss of the first few folios of several manuscripts did not result in the loss of the main Vendidad text. This preservation of the sacred scripture is entirely due to the dedication of the priests of yore. In the 19th century, through the efforts of various European savants, the different manuscripts of the Vendidad were collated and a standard edition was issued, which is still in use today for the ritual.

An introduction to the Vendidad

Our paper is concerned with the philosophy contained within this scripture and its significance to the contemporary man. As in all scriptures, time never diminishes their appeal and nor do they become irrelevant. It is only our capacity to imbibe them and to live according to their tenets that changes. This is the major difference between scripture and literature, though more often than not, both words are used interchangeably. Scriptures imply a revelation from God; literature encompasses the best efforts of man to express himself in an intelligent and articulate way. The trouble arises when we mix scripture with literature and try to apply the critical tools we use on literature to the word of God. This problem has plagued the philological study of Zoroastrian scripture since the time of the European savants and continues till today.

This paper attempts to break this mould of study. We have tried to present here a view point different from the one generally accepted today.

The Vendidad is the Pahlavi form for which the correct Avesta term is *Vi-daeva-data* ‘The Law against the Daeva.’ While the etymology is simple, the philosophy is not so.

The word *Daeva* has a negative connotation in the Zoroastrian scripture even though the Avesta word is generally thought to be derived, as in Sanskrit, from the root *div* – to shine. The fact that the word is used negatively in the Zoroastrian scriptures, along with a host of other words⁷ which have good resonances in the Vedic tradition, has been employed to promote the theory of the ancient split between the Aryan races giving rise to the Vedic religion in India and the Zoroastrian faith in Iran. This negative connotation ascribed to the word needs to be understood. In order to do so, an attempt is made here to describe the Avestan concept of time and to explain in brief the process of cosmogony, or as we prefer to call it, Cosmogogenesis.

Time in the Avesta

To comprehend the complicated order of Cosmogogenesis a detailed idea of the Zoroastrian concept of time needs to be developed. According to Zoroastrianism, there are various facets of time. The Eternal Time is described in the Avesta as being *Yavaecha Yavaetai*⁸ ‘Everlastingness, for ever and ever’. Within this are encompassed three distinct units of time – *Zravane Akarne*⁹, *Zravane Daregho-Khadata*¹⁰, and *Zravane Thwashe-Khadata*¹¹. Eternal Time is composed of 7 *Zravane Akarne* – Boundless Time, the unit of time in which the dual aspects of Time and Space are in perfect unison, moulded in a perfect oneness, a unit where the beginning is lost in the end as in a circle. Each such *Zravane Akarne* forms an Immortal Tense, leading to the seven distinct tenses found in the Avesta:

Table 1: The Seven Tenses in the Avesta

ZA No.	Tense	Avesta term
1	The Past of the Past	Para, paurva
2	The Past	Taro
3	The Present	Aaonghairya

4	The Present of the Present	Daedoisht
5	The Future	Apemem
6	The Future of Futures	Aparo Asti
7	The Remotest Future	Aparatemo

Each Zravane Akarne is formed of innumerable *Zravane Daregho-Khadata* – The Long Time, a cycle of 81,000 years in which the Earth goes through creation to destruction. Within this 81,000 year cycle are entwined innumerable *Zravane Thwashe-Khadata* – the Speedy Time - an individual man’s personal time span from birth to physical death and the after life.

Cosmogenesis

Pre-time and the First Zravane Akarne – The Past of the Past Tense

The Avesta mentions two distinct concepts of the Supreme Lord, the Impersonal Lord and the Personal Lord. The Impersonal Lord is known in Avesta as AHU – HE IS. HE is beyond the pale of understanding, unfathomable, unconceivable. HE IS, simply HE IS. AHU is in the state of *Asuna*¹² – The Zero of Inconceivable Potencies; The Darkness of Conceivability; the non-consciousness of Self. From this Ocean of Nothingness, from such a Deep Ocean of Boundless Extent Having No Motion, a drop presented itself having a motion. AHU thus awakened HIMSELF to the condition of existence and motion, drawing around HIM the Divine Curtain of Intellectual Impenetrability – *Niru*. The awakening of AHU caused the appearance of several manifestations, the primary ones being *Athra* – motion, *Yavaecha* – Divine Time, and *Niru* – Mother Nature. Thus emerged an Island of Light, Motion and Wakefulness – the Island of Inexhaustible and Evergreen Consciousness – *Khao Afrazyamna*¹³. In such a way began the First Tense of the Avesta Universe – The Past of the Past, remembered in the scriptures as *para maze yaongho*¹⁴ – The Great Events of the Past.

Within this Island of Consciousness there emerged two entities: *Baodangh* - Divine Intellect; and *Urvan* – The Advancing One. Both were in a state of great turmoil, wondering why they had been put in the condition of separation from AHU, rather than the deep and pleasant merged slumber of *Asuna*. AHU now showered on them the Divine Blessings of *Manthra Spenta* – the Mystery Revealing Benedictions. These blessings were so refulgent that the two entities could not grasp them. The blessings were reduced to one-tenth, yet the two could not grasp them. It was only when the

benedictions were reduced to a million of a millionth part (10^{-9}) that the Baodangh and Urvan were able to grasp them. Thus blessed, the Baodangh cried out in ecstasy – ‘YOU are all and I am nothing, O Great One. I have understood why we have been separated, THY will be done!’ The Urvan, being the Advancing One could not completely comprehend the situation and cried out: ‘YOU are all, but I am something too!’ From this exhibition of Primeval Ego, due to Primeval Ignorance was born Primeval Evil Arising Out Of Ignorance – *Dravao*¹⁵.

The emergence of the Primeval Ego resulted in the process of Cosmogogenesis coming to a complete halt – the Universe was as though put into a freeze-frame mode, called in the Avesta as *Afratat Kushi*¹⁶ – the Never Flowing of the Springs (of Divine Blessings). Now the Personal Lord Ahura Mazda manifested Himself and showered the blessings of Manthra Spenta on the still born Creation, and Creation moved forward. The Eternal Edict of Ahu – *Ahuna Vairya* - The Grand Plan and Wish of Ahu was now promulgated forth in full force. From the Plan emerged the solution for the removal of the Primeval Ego. Ahura Mazda, with the help of Niru, Mother Nature created the first two *Asmans* – Heavenly Planes full of Divine Light. He now poured the blessings of Manthra Spenta on the Urvan – the holder of the Primeval Ego. These blessings very nearly succeeded in removing the Primeval Ego. It was found that nine out of ten parts of the Ruvan were now free from the Primeval Ego. These nine parts were separated, and then merged with the Baodangh to form the first Divine Beings – the *Amesha Spentas* – the Beneficent Immortals and the *Yazatas* – Those Worthy of Attuning To. The collective working of the Amesha Spentas and the Yazatas resulted in the creation of the second nature, called *Aoj-Zor-Tagi* – the Augmented Nature.

The remaining one tenth part of the Urvan, in which the Primeval Ego was now resident, too sought to merge with Ahura Mazda and the Augmented Nature. It agreed to accept the working of the Ahuna Vairya on itself, and accordingly Ahura Mazda operated on this Urvan the Laws of *Mazdadhata* – The Laws of Outward and Downward Evolution. This remaining one-tenth part was made to breathe the *Ushtan* – The Subtle Life Force of Ahura Mazda. One half of this one-tenth part became emancipated and attained Holy Union. This emancipated one-half was divided into innumerable stars which dot the two Divine Asmans and commenced working in complete harmony with the Augmented Nature consisting of the Amesha Spentas and

the Yazatas. The other half was also eager to attain Holy Union. This remaining other half was divided into innumerable units of Urvan, which were then divided into 5 lots called Genera. Here ended the first Zravane Akarne – the First Tense of the Avesta – the Past of the Past.

The table below shows the journey of the Urvan from its creation till the end of the first Epoch of the Past of the Past Tense.

Table 2: The First Epoch – Zravane Akarne of the Past of the Past Tense

Notes	Division A	Division B	Div B gives rise to
1 - The Original Urvan with the Primeval Ego			
The First Division	1/10 remains adamant ↓	9/10 becomes emancipated→	Amesha Spentas & Yazatas
The one tenth adamant part is further divided into two	10/20 remains adamant ↓	10/20 becomes emancipated→	Stars of the Heavenly Planes
The remaining half adamant part is divided into innumerable parts and grouped into 5 primary Genera			
End of the First Epoch of the Past of the Past Tense			

The Second Zravane Akarne – The Past Tense

Now the second period of Boundless Time, which gave rise to the Past Tense commenced its operations, furthering the work of the first Zravane Akarne according to the Edict of the Ahuna Vairya. This Epoch commenced with the creation of the Immortal Universe, called *Haithyeng Asti*¹⁷ in Avesta, comprising of seven Immortal Heavens, made of Immortal Light. These were in addition to the two Heavenly Planes created in the first Zravane Akarne. These seven Heavens were set in motion by the Augmented Nature. The revolutionary motion of these seven Heavens is remembered in the Avesta as *ranyo skeretim gam*¹⁸.

Ahura Mazda and the Augmented Nature now began working in these Revolving Heavens to try and emancipate the remaining Urvan with the Primeval Ego. However, since the composition of these seven Immortal Heavens was different from the earlier created two Heavenly Planes, a modified functioning of the Mazdadhata was envisaged. Ahura Mazda emanated a projection out of His own Self and placed this projection on the 6th Immortal Heaven. This projection of Ahura Mazda was called *Spenta Mainyu* – the Bountiful Spirit. Taking into account the concentration of the Primeval Ego in the remaining parts of the Urvan, an anti-polar entity to Spenta Mainyu, working under the direction of Spenta Mainyu, was projected from Spenta Mainyu and placed on the 5th Immortal Heaven. This anti-polar, but nonetheless divine entity was called *Angra Mainyu* – the Decreasing Spirit. Angra Mainyu was a unique creation. Although he was a divine entity, he was created without a *Fravashi* – the guiding spirit which imbues total devotion to the will of the Ahuna Vairya. Hence the natural instinct of this being was to go against what was told to him. He was destined to work in a janitorial role with the most highly concentrated part of the Primeval Ego remaining in the Urvan, and hence was given only limited intellect and wisdom. His function was to beget friendship with the concentrated Primeval Ego in the Urvan. Then both would get together and create chaos. Once the chaos was created, the laws of Action and Reaction would come into play, and the road to salvation would become clear, as the Urvan was meted out its divine retribution through teaching and tasking. Such a unique entity was thus created and placed on the 5th Immortal Heaven, while his creator and guide Spenta Mainyu supervised him from the 6th Immortal Heaven.

Now the work of the emancipation of the remaining Urvan started. Each part of this remaining other half, which was divided into five Genera, was now divided into ten parts. Manthra Spenta blessings were again showered on them, whereby nine of the ten parts gained salvation, and became classified as the *Gav-Chithra* group of Urvan. They joined the Augmented Nature to further the Will of the Lord. The one tenth part, which remained un-emancipated, was again divided into further ten parts and the Divine Blessings were showered on these. Once again, nine of those ten further divided parts became emancipated, and joined the working of the Augmented Nature. But this last one-tenth part was not redeemable in the Immortal Heavens. For its redemption, mortal life was planned out, according to the Ahuna Vairya. Thus the

Mundane Universe was now required to be created, so as to further the work of the emancipation of the last remaining one-hundredth part of the Urvan with the Primeval Ego. Here ended the working of the second Zravane Akarne which gave rise to the Past Tense, wherein Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu worked in cohesion and co-operation, the former directing and the latter executing. Despite Angra Mainyu’s inherent tendency to rebel and disobey, the super spiritual levels of the Immortal Universe prevented these tendencies from playing out.

The table below shows the journey of the Urvan from the commencement till the end of the second Epoch of the Past Tense.

Table 3: The Second Epoch – Zravane Akarne of the Past Tense

Notes	Division A	Division B	Div B gives rise to
Creation of Spenta Mainyu on the 6th Immortal Heaven Creation of Angra Mainyu on the 5th Immortal Heaven			
One of the Urvan with the Primeval Ego divided into the 5 Genera			
The First Division in the Second Epoch	1/10 remains adamant ↓	9/10 becomes emancipated →	The Gav-Chithra Group of Urvan
The one tenth adamant part is further divided into ten parts	1/100 remains adamant ↓ ↓	99/100 becomes emancipated →	The Sabut Group of Urvan
The remaining one-hundredth adamant part is to be taken up in the next Epoch			
End of the Second Epoch of the Past Tense			

The Third Zravane Akarne – The Present Tense

Now the Third Epoch started, charged with the responsibility of creating the Mundane Universe. An intervening plane, called *Mino Karko*, between the Immortal Universe and the Mundane Universe was now created. The Augmented Nature now started working in the plane of Mino Karko, creating four atmospheric oceans, called *Zraya* in Avesta. Here arose for the first time, space, as we know it. After the evolution of

the Zraya, the Augmented Nature created 7 climes, called *Dakhyu*, arranged one within the other the like the coverings of an onion. Each of these Dakhyus had several intervening sub-planes, and each of these sub-planes contained innumerable globes, like our own Earth. The top six Dakhyus are invisible, but the seventh Dakhyu is perceivable and visible in the lower area. Our Earth is located somewhere on the second or third sub-plane of the last Dakhyu, called *Aipi* Dakhyu. Thus was created space, atmosphere and the skies. Below the last Dakhyu lies the Under World, called *Hankana*, and below it oceans of elements in molten states.

Now the Augmented Nature turned its attention to the emancipation of the remaining one hundredth part of the Urvan with the Primeval Ego, which was waiting in the Immortal Universe to come down and work to its salvation. The Augmented Nature now brought down the remaining one-hundredth part into the Zraya. Here this one-hundredth part, along with the other innumerable such one-hundredth parts were once again graded and divided into 5 secondary Genera, called *Jhirum*. The first Genera of souls were now divided into ten parts (that is $1/500^{\text{th}}$ part of the Original Urvan with Primeval Ego) and Manthra Spenta blessings showered on them. Nine of the ten parts, that is, 4999 out of 5000 were emancipated and formed the *Ardafravash* Group – The Great White Brotherhood, inhabiting the first three Dakhyus – *Aiwi*, *Antare* and *Aa*. One part remained adamant. Now the remaining four Genera of Urvan were taken up for emancipation. Each of the four Genera was split into ten parts and the Manthra Spenta blessings showered on them. Nine of the ten parts earned their salvation, became known as the *Arvahi* Group and began residing in the fifth, *Adairi* and sixth, *Upairi* Dakhyus. One part each of the remaining four Genera remained adamant.

The situation till this stage is depicted in the table below for added clarity.

Table 4: The Third Epoch – Zravane Akarne of the Present Tense

Notes	Division A	Division B	Div B gives rise to
Creation of the Four Zraya Creation of the Seven Dakhyus			
The remaining one-hundredth adamant part brought down from the Second Epoch			
This is broken into 5 secondary Genera – Jhirum			
Jhirum A 1/500th	Jhirum B 1/500th	Jhirum C 1/500th	Jhirum D 1/500th
of Original Urvan with Primeval Ego			
Urvan of Jhirum A is divided into ten parts (1/500 ÷ 10 = 1/5000)	1/5000 remains adamant ①	4999/5000 becomes emancipated	Ardafravash – The Great White Brotherhood on the 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd Dakhyus
Urvan of Jhirum B is divided into ten parts (1/500 ÷ 10 = 1/5000)	1/5000 remains adamant ②	4999/5000 becomes emancipated	The Arvahi Group on the 5 th and 6 th Dakhyus
Urvan of Jhirum C is divided into ten parts (1/500 ÷ 10 = 1/5000)	1/5000 remains adamant ③	4999/5000 becomes emancipated	The Arvahi Group on the 5 th and 6 th Dakhyus
Urvan of Jhirum D is divided into ten parts (1/500 ÷ 10 = 1/5000)	1/5000 remains adamant ④	4999/5000 becomes emancipated	The Arvahi Group on the 5 th and 6 th Dakhyus
Urvan of Jhirum E is divided into ten parts (1/500 ÷ 10 = 1/5000)	1/5000 remains adamant ⑤	4999/5000 becomes emancipated	The Arvahi Group on the 5 th and 6 th Dakhyus
Hence total adamant parts remaining are ① + ② + ③ + ④ + ⑤ , that is, 1/5000 + 1/5000 + 1/5000 + 1/5000 + 1/5000 = 5/5000, i.e., 1/1000 th of the original Urvan with Primeval Ego remains awaiting emancipation.			

Now the work commenced on emancipating the last remaining one-thousandth part of the original Urvan with the Primeval Ego. These were the Urvan destined to descend on our physical Earth. Now each part of these last remaining one-thousandth part was divided into ten parts. Man’s¹⁹ Urvan – the Soul, is this one-thousandth part. One tenth of Man’s Urvan, that is, one ten thousandth part of the Original Urvan is present in the Animal Kingdom inhabiting the Earth. One hundredth of man’s Urvan, that is one hundred-thousandth part is present in the Vegetable Kingdom inhabiting the Earth. Finally, one thousandth of man’s Urvan, that is, one millionth part of the Original Urvan resides in the Mineral Kingdom on this Earth. Each of these four counterparts was further divided into a pair of a male and a female.

This is depicted more clearly in the table below.

Table 5: The Final Division of the Adamant Part – Zravane Akarne of the Present Tense

Notes	Division		Notes
1/1000th Part of the Original Urvan with Primeval Ego remains for emancipation – constituting Man’s Urvan			
Man’s Urvan 1/1000th of the Original Urvan with Primeval Ego			
The First Division	1/10,000		Resides in the Animal Kingdom on Earth
	Male	Female	
The Second Division	1/100,000		Resides in the Vegetable Kingdom on Earth
	Male	Female	
The Third Division	1/1,000,000		Resides in the Mineral Kingdom on Earth
	Male	Female	

Now started the process of the preparation of this Earth for receiving the Urvan of Man and its counterparts in the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. The Earth went through three distinct phases, called *Ushi*²⁰ in Avesta, whereby it took on elements of a Fiery, Airy and Watery nature. In order for the Earth to receive the

blessings of the Augmented Nature, 16 spiritual energy receiving, processing and transmitting centres, called *Chakhras*²¹, were created at different places on the globe. Finally the Earth took the form we see today – the Earthy envelope, and Man was ready to descend in his current form, with the 1/1000th part of the original Urvan inside him as his soul. Just as the Earth went through the three Ushi phases, so also did the body of man, taking on bodily envelopes of the Fiery, Airy and Watery forms. Similarly, 16 energy receiving centres were also formed within the fiery form of the human body which would help man in his quest for the emancipation of the Urvan. These were also called *Chakhras*. In all these activities, the Augmented Nature did the work as per the Ahuna Vairya. Both Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu worked in close cohesion and cooperation, with the former directing and the latter executing. Even at this level, Angra Mainyu's innate tendencies to disobey and create chaos were kept within strict limits by Spenta Mainyu and the Augmented Nature. Here ended the Third Epoch of the Zravane Akarne giving rise to the Present Tense.

The Fourth Zravane Akarne – The Present of the Present Tense

Now began the fourth Epoch, the Present of the Present Tense. This fourth Zravane Akarne is divided into 12 periods called *Hazaras*. These are not to be taken as meaning a thousand years, but are in fact composed of thousands of Zravane Daregho-Khadata cycles. At this time our Earth took its present form. Now the method of cleaning the Primeval Ego from the fragmented parts of the Urvan took a new shape. There was no need for further fragmentation. The cleaning of the Urvan was to take place through the thoughts, words and deeds of men interacting with other men, following the Path of Truth and Righteousness. Hence the work of Angra Mainyu was completed. He was therefore sent to the lowest region of the Mundane Universe, below the seventh Dakhyu, the place called Hankana or the Under World. Here the anti-polar behaviour of Angra Mainyu flourished. His inherent evil tendencies, arising from the limited intellect given to him when he was projected out of Spenta Mainyu, were fully awakened and aroused. He could not bear to see the Earth flourishing and man working to salvation without his help. He therefore desired to enter the physical Earth and destroy it, for that seemed to him to be the apparent cause of his joblessness. Hence he desired to enter the Earth in an attempt to destroy it²².

At the same time, the first Men descended on the Earth. They contained within themselves, the Urvan of Jhirum A which had not yet been reformed. They were pious and holy men of very high spiritual stature. Their interaction with the rest of humanity and the lower kingdoms was appropriate and righteous. The only religion at this time was known as the *Mazdayasni* faith – the worship of the All Knowing Lord Ahura Mazda. When Angra Mainyu tried to enter the Earth by tempting these men with the great power and knowledge he possessed, they refused. They saw through his charade. This state of paradise on Earth is concomitant with the Garden of Eden revealed in the Bible. This state of affairs continued in the first, second and third Hazaras of the fourth Zravane Akarne. Thus the Urvan of Jhirum A quickly earned their salvation through the practice of Mazdayasni righteousness on Earth.

From the fourth Hazara, Urvan of the remaining Jhirum (Groups B, C, D and E) started descending on the Earth. These had a greater concentration of the Primeval Ego and were not as holy and righteous as the earlier Urvan. Angra Mainyu therefore targeted them with his wiles. He projected himself as the Daeva – the Luminous Shining One. But that was a deception. The earlier Jhirum A group had seen through his deception. Unfortunately, the Urvan of the other Groups could not do so. They gave in to his temptation (ate the apple, in Biblical terms) and allowed Angra Mainyu on to the Earth. Once he entered, Angra Mainyu, in his new projection as the Daeva, went on a rampage on the Earth. The book of sins was opened and read out to humanity. Humanity was immersed in sins of the worst kind. Everywhere there was darkness and corruption – physical, environmental and spiritual. The work of the emancipation of the Original Urvan with the Primeval Ego within man was forgotten. The Mazdayasni faith was dealt severe blows. A parallel and powerful faith arose – the cult of *Daevayasni* – the worship of the Deceiving One. At this point in time, *Geush Urva* – the Soul of the Earth cried out to Ahura Mazda, seeking a saviour²³ to lessen the burden on her.

In reply to the request of Mother Earth, Ahura Mazda chose a powerful entity from the Augmented Nature - a Divine Being of un-paralleled power. This entity was Zarathushtra the Yazata. From this Divine entity, a super human projection was emanated, and Zarathushtra the Yazata in human form descended upon the Earth for the first time in the fourth Hazara. He carried with him the *Vi-daeva-data* – the Laws

of Zarathushtra to go against the Daeva. He announced his mission to humanity, and put them back on the right track. He severely curtailed the activities of the Daeva, banishing him from the earth, and putting in place such checkpoints that he could not enter again. He revitalised the Mazdayasni faith, superimposing on it the new Zoroastrian creed. Hence the first revealed religion – the Mazdayasni-Zarathushtri faith was born. Zarathushtra accomplished his mission, including sowing the seeds for future religions that were to follow him, each of which would take care of the different Jhirum groups of souls who were descending on the Earth, and rejoined his true Yazatic form.

Such is the origin of the term Daeva, which we can now derive from the Avesta root *dav, dab* to deceive²⁴. It refers to the projection of the uncontrolled Angra Mainyu on the Earth, who wishes to destroy the Earth. The root *div* to shine is also appropriate, since Angra Mainyu is, after all, a Mainyu – a spiritual entity. Yet when he goes against the wishes of his master Spenta Mainyu, he takes on a form which deceives others. Hence the root *dab* to deceive. Having understood the origin of the Daeva and the need for the Vi-daeva-data, we can now better comprehend and appreciate the contents and the philosophy of this Scripture.

¹ The term Avesta does not occur in the Avesta scripture itself. It is derived from the Pahlavi *apastāk* ‘foundation text, original text’. The term occurs in Pāzand as *Avasta*, and in the Shāh Nāmeḥ as *avastā, ustā* (for metrical reasons); in other languages as Syrian *abastāg*; Arabic *abastaq, abasta, vastak, bastah*; Sanskrit *avistāvāk* ‘Avesta word’, or *avistavāni* ‘Avesta speech’.

² The word is defined as ‘one having golden camels’ (*zara* gold + *ushtra* camel). The Greek form is Zoroaster – the Golden Star. Dates for his advent vary widely from 650 BCE to 7500 BCE. See ‘Outlines of Parsi History’ by H. K. Mirza, pg 361-366

³ There are various accounts of this fact, including the *Dēnkard* ‘the works of the religion’ a 9th century Pahlavi mega volume containing summaries of the 21 Nasks. See *Denkard* Book III and Book IV. See also *Ardā Virāf Nāmak*, chapter 1.

⁴ Throughout this paper, the secular term BCE – before the Common Era and CE – Common Era is used instead of BC – before Christ and AD – the year of the Lord.

⁵ Derived from Old Persian *parthava*, originally signifies the language of the ancient province of Parthia in NE Iran. It is written in a script of Aramaic origin, with the ideogrammatical style. The script is polyphonous and a large number of Semitic ideograms are used, making it a difficult language to read.

⁶ There is no unanimity about the date of the advent of the Parsees in India. After several controversies, the generally accepted date today ranges from 750 CE to 781 CE.

⁷ *Ahura* vs. *Asura*; *Hom* vs. *Som*; *Yima* vs. *Yama* etc.

⁸ Vendidad III.14, 21, 39; V.26, 34; VII.37, 39; VIII.27; IX.41, 50.

⁹ Vendidad XIX.9, 13, 16.

¹⁰ Siroja 1.21

¹¹ Vendidad XIX.13

¹² Yasna 28.10

¹³ Fravardin Yasht, Karta 1.(Yt. 13.14)

¹⁴ Yasna 30.2

¹⁵ Vendidād V.35. Derived from root *dru* to run, to meander, to rove (one destined to roam the universe till he accepts the Truth.)

¹⁶ Fravardin Yasht, Karta 14 (Yt. 14.53)

¹⁷ Yasna 43.3

¹⁸ Yasna 50.2

¹⁹ Man from hereon includes woman unless otherwise specified.

²⁰ ‘The Early Morn of Salvation’.

²¹ Yasht 13.89

²² Yasht 13.77-78

²³ Yasna 29.1

²⁴ See Avesta Dictionary by Kanga, page 273 entry for *dyā*.