

# The Names of Ahura-Mazda.

BY IRACH J. S. TARAPOREWALLA, B. A., PH. D., BAR-AT-LAW.

Among the Zoroastrians mantras are recited in several ways. There is first of all the "remembering of the *Mantra*" or repeating it in one's mind. Next there is the muttering or repeating it in a low voice, which corresponds to the *Japa* of the Hindus. Lastly, there is the "loud recital" during ceremonials. The power of the *Mānthra-spenta* (the holy *mantra*) is clearly recognized and many mantras are regarded to be of special efficacy in various ways. Among such mantras whose *Japa* is recommended may be included the Names of the Supreme Being—Ahura-Mazda. There are 101 names of the Creator in Pazand, which seem to be an abbreviation of a much longer list, probably a thousand. But a much older list of these Supreme Names is found in the Hymn known as the *Ahura-Mazda-Yasht* (*Yasht* I of the scholars). It is a "hymn" made up of several parts, the most interesting of which is this one containing the names. This part corresponds in some ways with the tenth chapter of the *Gītā*. We will here give a sort of running commentary on that portion of the "Ahura-Mazda-Yasht".

Zarathushtra asks the Supreme Being:—

"O Ahura-Mazda, Spirit most holy, Thou Righteous Creator of the

material world,\* which portion of the Holy Mantras is the most powerful, the most conducive to success, the most glorious and the most effective? Which portion smites Evil the best and which best overpowers the evil thoughts of Evil Spirits as also of wicked mortals? Which portion best eases the mind in the midst of all this material world? Which portion doth best cleanse our souls in the midst of all this material world?"

To this Ahura-Mazda replies that it is the portion embodying the Names of the Supreme.

Next Zarathushtra requests Him that He should clearly declare those Names, so that with their help he might overcome all evil.

Thereupon Ahura-Mazda enumerates the first twenty Names. The first Name is the Sustainer. For the continuation of the Universe and for Evolution this is the most important aspect of God. Next He is the SHEPHERD. Here we see an exact parallel to *Gopāla*, which is an aspect of the All-sustaining Viṣṇu. He is the shepherd of human souls. The third Name is ALL-PERVADING, the fourth is SUPREME TRUTH—*Ashā Vahishta*. This *Asha* is the

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\* The phrase "material world" means *Sansara*.

Vedic *Rta*, the Supreme *Law* which rules the world. This *Law* is the very foundation of the ancient Faith of the Aryas and Zarathushtra made it the corner-stone of his religion. It is the only Path to God, this Path of Asha ( *Ashahe pantao—Rtasya panthāḥ* ) The fifth Name is the WHOLE GOOD CREATION. It is further characterized as “born of Asha.” This reminds us of the *Gītā*:-

यद्यद्भिभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।  
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽशसंभवम् ॥

( X. 41 )

God is in every bit of His Creation and His Creation is essentially good.

The sixth and seventh Names are KNOWLEDGE and POSSESSOR OF KNOWLEDGE; He is both *Jñāna* and *Jñātā*. The eighth and ninth Names are WISDOM and MASTER OF WISDOM.

The tenth and eleventh Names are HOLINESS and BESTOWER OF HOLINESS. The twelfth Name is the LORD OF LIFE, *Ahura*. This Name is the Vedic *Asura*, the Lord of *asu* ( *prāṇa*, Life ) \* The thirteenth Name is ALMIGHTY, the fourteenth is the FRIEND OF ALL. This fourteenth Name is the foundation of *Bhakti*. The fifteenth Name is INVINCIBLE.

The sixteenth Name is very remarkable—the JUST ACCOUNTANT. The epithet means literally “He who remembers truly”. This epithet is

expounded in the *Gāthās*,\* where *Mazdā* is described as “best remembering all the acts of mortals whether done in the past or to be done in the future”. In another place of the *Gāthās* the account of all human acts is mentioned and the final adjustment of it by the Lord is referred to. It is the inexorable *Law* of *Karma* and *Mazdā* is the Just Accountant who sees that every being gets exactly what is due.

The seventeenth Name is ALL-SEEING, the eighteenth is the HEALER and the nineteenth is the LAW-GIVER. The last Name of this list is MAZDĀ, the Lord of Creation. This Name has been explained by many as “the Great Wise One” ( *Mahājñānī* ). But I take it as derived from *maz* ( Sanskrit *mah*, *mahat* ) and the root *dā* ( Sanskrit *dhā* ). I take the Name to mean “the Creator of the Great” ( Universe ). The two most commonly used Names are *Ahura* and *Mazda*, the Lord of Life and the Lord of Creation; and the compound Name used most often for the Supreme Being is *Ahura-Mazdā*, the Lord of Life and Form. In a sense this Name sums up all that might be implied in the idea of God.

These twenty Names “should be remembered and should be repeated aloud by day and by night”, whenever one is in danger from one’s foes.

There are fifty-three further Names enumerated in this hymn. But

\* It is rather remarkable that the word *Ahura* is found in *Gobhila-Sutras*.

\* These are the poetical sermons of Zarathushtra.

several of them are repetitions or are synonyms. They might, however, be enumerated here:—

1. Protector, 2. Creator, 3. Preserver, 4. Discerning, 5. Holiest Spirit, 6. Healer, 7. Best Healer, 8. Priest ( *Āthravan* ), 9. Highest Priest\*, 10. Lord of Life, 11. Lord of Creation, 12. Righteous, 13. Most Righteous, 14. Glorious, 15. Most Glorious, 16. Full-seeing, 17. Fullest-seeing, 18. Far-seeing, 19. Farthest-seeing, 20. Watcher, 21. Creator, 22. Protector, 23. Saviour, 24. Knowing, 25. All-knowing, 26. Lord of Prosperity, 27. Holy *Mantra* of Prosperity†, 28. Potent Ruler, 29. Omnipotent Ruler, 30. Famous Ruler, 31. Most Famous Ruler, 32. Non-deceiver, 33. Far-from-Deceit, 34. Perfect Protector, 35. Subduer of foes, 36. Conqueror at one stroke, 37. Conqueror of all, 38. Architect of the Universe, 39. Universal Light, 40. Light Eternal, 41. Lord of Light, 42. Brilliant in Action, 43. Mighty in Action, 44. Mighty, 45. Valiant, 46. Almighty, 47. Righteous, 48. Exalted, 49. Sovereign Lord, 50. Most puissant Sovereign, 51. Wise, 52. Wisest of the Wise, 53. Far-sighted.

These are the Names.

The hymn then goes on to declare:—

\* Cf. पुरोधसां च मुख्यं मां विद्धि पार्थ बृहस्पतिम्।

† A special *mantra* which brings prosperity to him who recites it properly.

“And whosoever in this mundane life, O Spitama Zarathushtra, doth remember and repeat aloud these Names, by day or by night,—if he recite them whether getting up or lying down, whether tying on the sacred girdle or ungirding it,\* whether starting forth from his own home, or from his own province, or from his own land, or whether arriving in a foreign land,—unto such a man shall come neither by day nor by night any harm from any evil-minded emissaries of Wrath.....†

“Such are these Names, full of import; they serve as a shield and a complete defence against demons, against scoffers on destruction bent, against the Arch-fiend, the Destroyer of all, the Spirit of Evil.‡

“These Names are a defence as if a thousand were guarding one man.”

“These Names are indeed ‘full of import’ if one meditates upon them and thinks out what each of them implies. It is also remarkable that the total number is seventy-three, just one-fifth of the number of days in the year.”

\* The Zoroastrian sacred girdle which is untied and tied on again ( to the repetition of mantras ) at the commencement of every ceremony.

† The Demon of Wrath—*Krodha*.

‡ This is the *Maya*.

