

Thus Spake
the Real
Zarathushtra



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*Dedicated to the memory of my late father
Sirous*

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Foreword

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche at the height of the great age of reason introduced his philosophy of man and superman, suggesting that humanity would eventually evolve to reach superhumanity.

While in a sense his philosophy was alluding to similar concepts as Zarathushtra's, the rationality of his age precluded spirituality as the way of arriving at this state. Later on some of his ideas were perverted to give rise to Nazism.

At the height of the age of reason, many European thinkers were impressed with the names of some of the Eastern philosophers, particularly Zarathushtra. Therefore, Nietzsche chose to name his great book "Thus Spake Zarathushtra".

Richard Strauss was a famous composer of that era who chose the same title for his musical Masterpiece, popularized by the movie "2001, A Space Odyssey".

In my own spiritual search, I started with Zoroastrianism, and after going the full circle, I have returned to Zarathushtra's philosophy, understanding its mystical aspects for the first time.

In an attempt to explain my understanding of Zarathushtra's spiritual yet pragmatic teachings, I present this work of fiction. I have no scholarly claims to the accuracy of my attempts at paraphrasing other people's translations of the "Gathas". This story is meant to be exactly that, a story.

I hope the reader will enjoy reading this book, and perhaps may be tempted to find out more about Zarathushtra's teachings, and maybe even be encouraged to move faster along his or her own spiritual path.

May you enjoy the experience of climbing your own mountain. May you reach your mountain top. And may you return to propagate the word.

Shahriar Shahriari
January 1996,
Vancouver Canada

'May we be among those who renew the world.'

Gathas 30:9

Thus Spake *the Real* Zarathushtra

Mid morning in the supernatural forests near Vancouver in blessed Beautiful British Columbia, immersed in my thoughts, I was walking, breathing in the fresh air. Suddenly I saw a bright light appear right in front of me, approximately 15 feet away. Startled I stopped. It was so quick and so mesmerizing that I did not have time to check my feelings. There was neither panic nor joy. I was rooted to the ground, immobile in my astonishment.

Out of the bright light stepped a young bearded figure. He seemed to be in his early thirties, approximately my own age. His beard was thick, curly and black. He had a white T-shirt on and was wearing a pair of faded blue jeans. His blue-green eyes were glowing with a special light. The kind that you normally find looking at wise grandfathers.

As he approached me he said, "Hi!"

In spite of my astonishment, I calmly responded.

"I am Zarathushtra," He introduced himself without blinking.

"Yeah right!" I thought to myself and responded, "Zarathushtra who?"

"Zarathushtra Spitama. You know, the one you have been reading about." Again he was very calm. Too calm.

In mocking disbelief I responded, "Yeah right! I am Julius Caesar. No, better than that, I am Jesus Christ!"

He smiled very calmly and said, "I thought you may have difficulty accepting this. I suppose you want some proof."

"Look man," I said, "either you are a nut case if you expect me to believe this, or I have lost it completely."

He almost laughed and continued, "I understand. In the books that you have read, I was born a few thousand years ago and died a few decades later. I am long gone. I do not exist except in history books. That is why I thought you may need some proof."

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"Go on...." I responded.

"Well, perhaps it would be best if I told you a little bit about yourself. That way you will be able to verify the information, because you lived it yourself."

"I am listening...." I said, wondering what on earth was going on.

"OK. Where do I start? I suppose in the beginning. You were born in the same country as I was, into a family of Zoroastrians. That is what they call your religion nowadays, right?"

I nodded in response.

"Your parents did not believe in the rituals of the religion, and never tried to indoctrinate you into it either. In fact you did not care about your religion until you were in your mid twenties, after you migrated to the opposite side of the world."

"How does he know all these things?" I was thinking to myself.

"When you first started reading about your religion, you were quite impressed by the cosmology that I had proposed. In fact it was so interesting for you that you started presenting the idea to other young people in your religion."

"Hmm!" I was still baffled.

"And you found my philosophy so exciting, you started studying my divine songs. Do you still call them the 'Gathas'?" He asked.

I simply nodded.

"Right now, among your people, at least on this continent, you are quite well known, not as a scholar, but as someone who understands this philosophy quite well".

"You flatter me," I said, half mockingly.

"Do you have enough proof, or do you still want me to get more specific?" He asked.

I was thinking, "This must be a trick that my subconscious mind is playing on me. After all, I am in this beautiful natural setting. The weather is nice and warm, the sun is filtering through the trees, and the air is amazingly fresh. Even though I have not taken any mind expanding substances, it is quite conceivable that I am experiencing a naturally induced altered state of consciousness."

I was also thinking how on earth I could explain all of this to anybody else?

I was not sure how to respond, but by then, perhaps because of his calmness, I was very calm too. So I simply thought to myself that I should play along. After all, what harm can this do? So I softly said, "I am satisfied with your information and proof. Now, why have you come here?"

He said, "You have reached a stage in your thoughts and belief that you have certain questions. I have come here to discuss them with you, and maybe I can help you, and maybe you can help me with mine."

"OK, that is fair," I said, "where do we start?"

"Well, let's start by you asking me questions. Imagine that Zarathushtra has come to visit you and you can ask him anything you want."

"Anything I want?" I asked.

"Yes, anything. I won't promise that I will have answers for all of your questions though. I will only answer as much as I know."

"Fair enough," I responded, thinking that even enlightened prophets have their limitations. "Let me ask you a few questions which arise out of my curiosity. But they have nothing to do with your philosophy."

"OK," He very simply responded.

"Why are you so young? I mean in most of the pictures that I have seen of you, you were much older, and your hair was longer and so was your beard, and they were both red not black. How come you have black hair and beard now?"

"Well, I must say, all the pictures you have seen of me were fictitious drawings coming out of the imagination of the artists who wanted to create my portrait. So in their attempts to glorify me, they chose a colour which was unusual for them. They opted for red hair and it stuck with my portraits. There are some pictures where my hair and beard is a different colour. Anyway, in my physical features, I looked a lot like the others in that region of the world."

"And what about your age? Are you as wise at this age and would you be able to give decent answers to my questions?" I asked.

"I have to explain to you that in the fifth dimension, the dimension of consciousness, age is irrelevant. When I chose to appear to you in your four dimensional world, I chose this age. I could just as easily have chosen a different form or age, including having red hair and appearing in my sixties. Does this bother you? If it is that important to you for me to appear older, I could change."

"No this is just fine," I responded hastily, realizing the folly of my question. "You know how it is when you live in the four dimensional world. You get so used to appearances that anything different from what you expected brings up questions and doubts." I was also glad that he had established he was from the fifth dimension, whatever that was.

"That is OK. I know what you mean. I had to struggle with this when I was here too," He responded with a very kind and gentle voice.

"Now one more question which may sound stupid to you, but I kind of want to get it out of the way," I said.

"Go on," He responded just as kindly, "and don't worry about how stupid or strange your question may sound, then I will feel free to answer as strangely as I want."

"It's a deal!" I said quickly, and went on to ask, "You know, there is a very large discrepancy among the scholars as to the date of your birth. Some put it at about 27 centuries ago, while others go as far back as 7-8 millennia. Can you clarify this once and for all? What was the correct time of your birth?"

He was pensive for a while, I suppose thinking how to answer me so that he would not offend me. Then he said, "You know when I told you that age is irrelevant in the fifth dimension?"

I nodded.

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"Well, frankly I have not kept track of how many of your years have passed since I left this planet. So I can't tell you who is right. In a way, I guess it is not important to know when I was born. What is really important is if my message makes any sense and if people understand it today. And even more important than that is whether they put it into practice in their lives or not."

"You are right," I said half ashamed, but then I remembered that we had a deal to ask and say whatever felt right, regardless of how absurd it would appear to the other. Anyway, if my subconscious mind is playing this game, who cares what I ask. I mean nobody would hear or judge me for this.

"Tell me, which one of my teachings is the most famous today?" He asked, I suppose prompting me to get to the philosophy.

"The 3 G's!" I answered.

"The 3 G's?" He was not sure what I meant.

"Yes. You know, Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds," I said casually.

"It is very interesting to see how the people of your generation can only digest what is given to them in sound bites. I suppose if you could not say this in less than two lines, nobody would know it."

"That's the 20th century for you," I responded. "But luckily we are moving into the 21st century soon."

* * *

I was quiet for some time, and so was he. I suppose he was pondering the short attention span of the people today. I hoped he would not try to come back to me with 30 second responses just to make it simple for me. I was also pondering what I should ask him.

Finally I said to him, "Z, you don't mind me calling you Z do you?"

"Not at all," He responded, probably thinking that this was another outcome of our short attention span.

"Do you know which part of your philosophy I like best?"

"Which?" He asked curiously.

"The Amesha Spentas, you know, the divine emanations."

"What do you like about them?" He asked.

"Well, the whole thing. I like the way it very simply defines the stages of creation and maintenance. It is super intelligent. It applies to the whole cosmos, and to each individual person, and to every thing that we do in our lives. It is a principle of universe that applies at every level. It is wonderful."

"Well, if something is truly Good, it is good in more than one way," He said calmly.

"Funny you say that. The other day I was talking to a friend of mine and I told him exactly the same thing. I mean I even used the exact same words. Wow."

"Remember, we all tap into the same infinite intelligence, so it is not surprising that you would have used exactly the same words."

I was thinking, "I like this guy. He is cool and gentle too. He takes compliments very well, and dishes them out too when they are deserved. Yeah we could become really good friends."

"Tell me more about the divine emanations. I'd like to know how you would analyze them. It would be good for me to see if my philosophy was understood or not," He requested just as gently.

"Well, I was hoping you would do most of the talking. But I suppose we learn most by teaching. So bear with me while I assume that I am teaching you. But please feel free to jump in any time you think there is a misunderstanding," I said trying to be as humble as I could.

"OK," was his only response.

"I suppose I should start from the six emanations. First name them and then explain each one. They are the Plan, the Law, Action, Love, Perfection and Immortality."

He simply nodded.

"And there is a basic underlying assumption: In the universe there is an infinitely powerful creative mind at work."

He was simply listening intently.

I went on to explain, "You called this creative mind Ahura Mazda, which is translated in today's terms as Ahura meaning The Lord Creator, and Mazda meaning The Supremely Wise. I know you also said that this creative mind could be described by many other nouns and adjectives, and I know traditionally as many as one hundred and one different names are used. But I think the point was to show that there are so many different ways of getting to know the Creative Mind that we should not deify the words or the names, but get to know the essence."

"Very good. I am impressed," He smiled.

Feeling good about myself I continued, "For the sake of simplicity, let's just stick with Ahura Mazda or either one of the two words. And again for ease of our discussion, I will stick to the English names of the emanations."

"Fair enough," He said.

Half smiling I added, "Let's face it, the names you used are quite a mouthful."

He laughed lightly.

"Now back to the emanations," I recovered myself. "What you said was that for the world to begin, first the Creative Mind, Ahura Mazda, created the Plan. A blue print if you will, based on which the entire universe could be created. This plan included all the details of space and time, as well as what goes where, when and how."

He was simply listening.

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"Which takes us to the How. Mazda decided to create the Law. The Law was simply the principles based on which this creation, the universe would work. These included such principles as cause and effect, interdependence and inter-reflection, progress and so on."

"We should come back to some of these principles later on, but for now just continue," He requested.

"OK. Then Ahura in his infinite wisdom thought: 'we now have the blue print, and the rules of the game. Now let's get acting and let's create!' which brings us to the next emanation which is Action. Nothing is created without action. You must get to work to create what you planned."

"And while Mazda was starting to act, the method, quality and ease of action became an important issue. So the fourth emanation, which is Love comes into play. This emanation simply said that the Creative Mind not only actually created the universe, but also created it with infinite benevolent Love. If action was the force of creation, Love was the quality of creation."

He was still listening calmly, without indicating whether I was on the right track or not.

So I continued, "Which brings us to the next emanation. Perfection. If the universe was conceived perfectly, had perfect principles to operate on, was perfectly acted upon to create, and was created and sustained with infinite benevolent love, then the universe was perfect."

Assuming that I needed to explain further I said, "You must understand that perfection is not the same as completion. Universe was created as a perfect creation which was progressing along perfect principles to complete itself."

He nodded to indicate that he understood.

"Which finally brings us to immortality. Once the universe has reached its perfect completion, it becomes immortal and will continue indefinitely." After a pause I added, "I suppose this is the part that I still cannot come up with a metaphor for when it comes to the cosmos, but when applied to us or our works, I can easily explain it."

Zarathushtra said, "I understood what you were explaining and agree with it in general. But now let's get more specific. Let's start by you giving me some examples of how this same principle applies at a microcosmic level. Start with human beings and go on to the works that we do."

"OK," I said. "But can we move from here into a more open area? I am feeling a little cold, and I would appreciate having the sun shine on us directly."

"Let's go," He responded. "In fact there is a clearing about 100 yards away from here."

This was another thing. How could he speak English, and how did he know all these terms like yard, and how did he know where the clearing was?

* * *

On our way to the clearing I asked him, "How do you know English so well, and how do you know there is a clearing there?"

He simply said, "I will explain later."

When we got to the clearing, he sat on a log, and I was standing, facing the sun, absorbing as much energy as I could. After a few moments of just being there and enjoying the energy, I turned around and asked, "Should I continue?"

"Please..." He responded.

"Well, let's first talk about human beings. Our lives follow the same emanations as the Creative Mind. We are first conceived based on a blueprint. Science tells us that this blueprint is genetically encoded in us. I suspect there is more to it than that, but that is not the point here. The point is that there is a blueprint, a plan for our physical being on earth. There are also certain laws that we must abide by. The laws as they apply to the four dimensional space-time continuum that we live in." I paused and asked, "Am I using too many big words?"

"I can understand them. Feel free to use whatever you wish," He said with his trademark gentleness.

"OK. So there are principles. Principle of growth and progress. Principle of cause and effect etc. Then we come to action. We must act to live. We breath, we eat, we think, etc. etc. Each one of these involves action. And then there is benevolent love. This is the same love that Jesus referred to. Love of all. Everyone and every thing. Love of the animals and plants and inanimate objects, and rocks and rivers and the mountains and our planet. The more lovingly we act, the more quality our actions will have. The more loving we become, the wiser we become."

"This is all very well and understandable. Now let's get to the abstract stuff. What about perfection and immortality?" He asked.

"OK. But first I have to go back to the first four emanations before I can explain the last two. Much in the same way as our blueprints are perfectly conceived and we abide by the laws of nature, in everything we do or say, we must also think clearly and create perfect blueprints. Our actions must be well thought of, so must our communications. They must also be in accord with the natural laws, otherwise we will be beating our heads against a brick wall."

He was simply looking at me, his eyes still displaying their bright glow.

"Then we must act regarding everything we want to do or achieve in our lives, powerfully and lovingly. Now if we do all of these things, we achieve perfection in our lives. We become perfect and complete human beings."

"What about immortality?" He asked.

"Some say when you referred to immortality, you were referring to the immortality of the soul. However, based on what we just discussed, I don't think it is limited to that. I think if we achieve perfection in our lives, that perfection should include perfect health. Then if we choose to stay around for ever, we would be able to. And if we choose to leave the four dimensional world, we should continue to exist in the fifth dimension. Immortally."

"Kind of like I am now?" He responded.

I must admit that his retort made me question my own belief about whether I was talking to my subconscious mind or to the soul of Zarathushtra himself.

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He waited for a while, recognizing that I was deep in thought trying to digest what he just said. Then he said, "What about our actions?"

I pulled my thoughts together and after clearing my throat said, "Well, I have already explained most of it, but let me repeat some of my points before I come to the appropriate conclusion."

"That's fine," He said with his usual gentleness.

"As I said a few minutes ago, in anything that we do or anything that we communicate, we must first think clearly about it with our creative mind. Conceive the ideal or at least the nearest thing to the perfect plan. We must also recognize the natural laws which we must follow. Otherwise we will find that our actions will be meeting much resistance and perhaps failure. Then we must act powerfully and lovingly, whether the action is thinking a thought, communicating a message or performing a deed. The power in our action must be with energy and conviction, and with faith that we will achieve the desired results. The love in our action must be a benevolent love, one that embraces all."

"Now here is the interesting part. Perfection. Should we be perfectionists?" He asked.

"The part about perfection does not refer to perfectionism but to quality. If we put conviction and energy and love in our actions, and if we have planned them well and in accordance with the natural laws, then we will achieve the highest quality possible. That is perfection. We must remember that the world that we live in is not complete but it is perfect. Perfection is not in completion but in the process, in the quality of progress. It is whether we are on the path of least entropy or not."

"Very interesting interpretation. What about immortality?" Zarathushtra asked.

"Well, let me explain this by giving an example. Let's say in my work, I am working on a project. If I have planned it well and in accordance with the natural laws and the regulations and laws governing my project, and if I perform my duty with power and love, then I achieve the perfect result. The result of highest quality with least entropy. That perfection in itself will last for ever. My work becomes immortal and timeless. Even if years from now the whole project is obsolete and destroyed, my work will be recorded as that of the highest quality. Even if my company goes out of business and I lose my job, because of the quality of my work people will remember me. Others will seek me to work on different projects with them. That is immortality. Letting the perfection speak for itself."

"You seem to have thought of everything in this regards. So what makes you still question the perfection and immortality of the macrocosm?" He asked.

"Well, it's difficult to conceive of a universe that goes on for ever. Most other philosophies refer to a cyclical nature of the universe. Even the Big Bang theory has a cyclical nature of void, explosion, expansion, contraction, implosion, and back to void, explosion, expansion, etc. all over again. How can this perfection continue for ever even after completion?" I asked.

"For one thing, it could be cyclical and perfect. For instance, can we not equate the time of contraction in your Big Bang theory to a time of near completion, and so implosion will correspond to completion, and then you start all over again? Does restarting after completion make the universe any less perfect? Or immortal?" He responded.

After pondering this for some time I said, "I must admit what you are proposing makes perfect sense. While in the microcosm I could separate completion and perfection, in the macrocosm I was confusing them. Just because the time frame gets longer, it does not mean that the essence changes."

"That is another thing. Time frame," He said.

"What about time frame?" was my natural reply.

"Well, do you remember when I first saw you I was talking about the fifth dimension?" He responded.

"Yes?"

"In your analysis you have completely ignored the fifth dimension, except for the time that you were referring to the immortality of the soul."

I must have shown a very blank look on my face because he smiled slightly. Then he went on to say, "Well I am here now!"

"Do you mean to say that your soul or spirit is immortal and that is why you are here now?" I asked.

"I suppose you could say that, but it is slightly more complicated yet a lot simpler at the same time."

"A paradox!" I said, "I love paradoxes."

"The paradox exists only if you look at it from the four dimensions. If you transcend to the fifth, you will see that immortality does not refer to for ever. Being immortal is not to live for a very long time. It is simpler than that. It is to live timelessly. In a universe where there is no time".

"So how can you come here and be with me if there is no time where you come from? How can you walk in the woods from one place to another with me, and how can you hold a dialogue with me all this time, if there is no time where you come from?" I asked.

"That's another thing. There is no space as you know it either. But let me go back to the time. In the fifth dimension, we are free from the constraints of time. We do not get old. We just are. And that is how you become immortal. I can be here with you and be with so many other people in different places, all at the same time, because where I come from there is no time. I am immortal and I am perfect. But let's just leave this subject here and maybe we will come back to it later. I understand how difficult it must be to try to see the fifth dimension from a four dimensional world," He suggested.

I agreed immediately, thinking that I need some time to digest this. Then I asked, "Can we take a break now? I need some time to digest all of this. In fact is it possible for me to come back here and see you tomorrow? If you leave now can you come back? And will you come back? Because I still have a lot of questions to ask you." I noticed that I was almost pleading with him.

He smiled softly and said, "That is fine. I will see you here again tomorrow your time. In fact come here any time that is convenient for you. It would not make any difference to me. I will be here, because remember where I come from there is no time."

* * *

That night I could hardly go to sleep. Different ideas were circling around in my head. I had even picked up the "Gathas" and read it a couple of times. I was thinking it was lucky that his divine songs were fairly short. One could read them in a couple of hours. It was not like most other religious books which were just too long and too involved.

It was then that I promised myself that if I ever write a book, I would make it short and to the point.

I kept thinking about immortality and timelessness. I realized that I had to take myself out of the four dimensions to even have a chance of understanding what he was talking about. How can there be a place that could have no time. Then I remembered that sometimes during meditation I would lose all sense of time. I wouldn't know if 2 seconds had passed or 20 minutes. There is a strange feeling when it happens but it is real. Also sometimes when I was working on something that I really liked, a few hours may have passed when I thought only an hour had gone by. I would look at my watch and realize that time had slowed down for me. Could this be what he was referring to?

But then on a more abstract level, if there is no time, and if he has the ability to come to our four dimensional universe, and as he said, be in different places talking to different people all at the same time, our time, then can he also travel back in time and forward in time? If he can be in different places simultaneously, can he also be in different times at the same place simultaneously? And for that matter can he be in different places and at different times, all at once which is what really happens if there is no time?

More importantly, if he has achieved perfection and immortality, are there others who have done the same? Then can they also be doing all of this at once in no time? Can they simultaneously be everywhere, all together? Then would they not all be the same one who is everywhere at the same time? How can they be different individuals? Do we lose individuality by being in the fifth dimension? Then how come he showed up here as Zarathushtra, the individual?

What about the Creative Mind, Ahura Mazda? If there is no time and no space, then everybody who used to be individual and is now perfect and immortal must at the same time be everywhere and at every time, just like Ahura Mazda. Do we become God when we go into the fifth dimension?

I think it was around 5:30 a.m. when I finally collapsed of mental exhaustion and went to sleep.

* * *

It was early afternoon when I got to the forest. I was walking and pondering what I was going to ask him when he would appear. And as I took a couple of deep breaths of the fresh forest air, the light beam appeared again, and he stepped out of it.

"I must check my diet and what I have been eating lately," I thought to myself.

"You are still sceptical about me, aren't you?" He asked without any introduction.

"Do you blame me?" I responded.

"Well, it does not matter any way. What is important is if you get your questions answered. It is not important for you to believe in me or my existence. I would prefer to make sense rather than convince you through my authority," He smiled.

I felt good about what he said. Here is a man of integrity who cares more about the content than the packaging.

"How are your thoughts coming along?" He asked with obvious concern in his look.

"Fine. I slept for 3 hours last night, and my mind has been racing since I left you yesterday."

"You know, one of the biggest problems this fifth dimension creates is the paradox of individuality," He said as if reading my mind.

"What do you mean?" I played along.

"Well you see, looking at it from the four dimensions, the obvious question that arises is am I the only one who has reached perfection and immortality or are there others? And as I was telling you yesterday, I can be in different places at the same time and at different times, then I must have the ability to be everywhere at the same time and at all times."

"As a matter of fact I was thinking about this exact same problem myself," I replied.

"Now the next obvious question is that if there are others who have reached this state, then we could all be everywhere at the same time and all the time. In other words, we are either inside each other, or we are the same entity."

"Exactly!" I said with excitement.

"And then the next question is then how can we be the same entity and be individuals simultaneously?"

"I couldn't have asked it better myself," I replied, thinking that I got his argument to collapse on itself.

"Well the problem is that you are still looking at it from the four dimensions. In the fifth dimension the word simultaneously does not apply. But let me not play on words here and continue with the questions," He said calmly.

"Go on!"

"The next obvious question is: 'but if we the perfect immortals are omnipresent, and if so is Ahura Mazda, then are we and Ahura Mazda one? And if we are individualized, then would Ahura Mazda be an individual entity also?' What do you think?"

Trying to evade the question I responded, "This is the perfect follow up question. So are you saying that you are Ahura Mazda? Am I standing here talking to God? Or am I talking to myself? Did you create me or did I create you?"

"Yes!" He said emphatically. "The answer to all of these questions is yes."

"Come on...." I pleaded.

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"This is the perfect human dilemma. We create God in our own image. Now this becomes a circular argument. Did God create us in its image or did we create God in our image? And we go round and round and round," He said rather enjoying himself.

"Well, are you going to help me out or are you going to leave me here stuck in my vicious circle?" I demanded.

"Let me change the subject," He responded.

"What is the matter, you just want to confuse me and leave me in a philosophical black hole?" I asked rather angrily.

"You would not understand it if I explained it to you. Let me go to something different which may be able to help you later on. Be patient my friend and don't get angry with me. It will serve no purpose. And remember, I was the one who preached bringing benevolent love into our actions and communications. Now why should you think that I am acting sadistically?"

"I apologize," I said calmly deciding to give him the benefit of the doubt. After all, he was Zarathushtra.

"Yesterday you were talking about human beings having the ability to use their creative mind to plan and act according to the six emanations. It was not just the macrocosm but also the microcosm," He said with his trademark gentleness in his voice and his eyes.

"Yes?"

"You also referred to Ahura mazda as the Creative Mind."

"Yes?"

"Now do you see any similarity between the Creative Mind of the macrocosm and that of the microcosm?" He asked patiently.

I thought for a minute and then asked, "Do you mean to say that the reason this applies to both the microcosm and the macrocosm is because we make the same underlying assumption in both? That of the creative mind?"

"Wouldn't it make sense if we went by that?" He said.

"So you mean if we did not have this creative mind of ours, then we would not have the six emanations apply to us?" I said with my mind still racing.

"What do you think?" He said. "Are there any other scenarios that you could come up with which would logically explain the reason for this similarity?"

"Not at the moment."

"Then let me ask you a few questions," He said.

"Provided that you will not confuse me," I responded jokingly.

"I'll try not to." He smiled back and continued, "Let's assume that the reason the microcosm has the same emanations as the macrocosm is because of this similarity in essence. That of the existence of the Creative Mind. In the one with capital letters and in the other with small letters."

"OK."

"Then tell me what do you think of this similarity in essence?" He asked and remained quiet.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean exactly what I asked. What do you think of the similarity in essence," He responded and grew silent again.

Realising that he was not going to help, I thought of getting back to him with questions, and said, "Well, we said that the essence of the creative mind exists both in human beings and in Ahura Mazda."

He nodded.

"We both have creative powers. Ours is a lot less than Ahura's, but nevertheless it is the same essence," I continued realising that I still had not asked him any intelligent questions. He nodded again and remained completely quiet.

"Because our creative mind is much smaller, our powers are much smaller too," I said.

"So what you are saying is that quantity is the determining factor," He said cryptically.

"What do you mean?" I asked again with a question mark and a blank look on my face.

"Well, you just said the essence is the same. In other words the quality of our creative mind is the same as that of the Creator. But because our mind is much smaller, we become powerless."

"Not powerless," I responded quickly, "but less powerful."

"So you mean to say that we can create anything in the universe, but it takes us more effort?" He asked.

"No. I mean to say that we can create anything that Ahura can create, and it will take us the same amount of energy, but because our minds are smaller, it will take us a lot longer," I said pleased with my answer.

"Ah. So it will take Mazda a lot less time than it will take us. But I thought Mazda was immortal and timeless."

He found the hole in my argument again. "So what are you saying? That we can create anything that Mazda can in no time at all? Are we omnipotent like Ahura Mazda, the Creator of the Universe?" I said impatiently.

"All I am saying is that you are still thinking about something five dimensional from the limitations of four dimensions. You have to transcend that to understand it. And you don't need to get angry with me," He said again with his consistent gentleness.

I was embarrassed and apologized again.

"Look, I am not trying to confuse you. I recognize that you have come a long way in your thinking, but you have to expand your paradigm, you have to transcend where you are thinking from to move on to the next plateau of understanding and realization."

"Thank you for your patience and caring. Just bear with me if I lose it. Don't take it personally," I said sheepishly.

"OK, let me try one more time but this time I will explain."

I was relieved.

"You should stop looking at yourself as separate from the world around you, and from other people who are alive or who are gone from the four dimensions and are living in the fifth dimension. You should also stop seeing yourself as separate from Ahura Mazda. I know it sounds like a mystical cliché, but you must understand that it is all one. There is no separation. That I am you and you are me, and we are the animals and the plants and the earth, and the earth is the universe and that we are all one. We are Ahura Mazda." His words were coming at me very quickly but for the first time I felt that I understood them.

He continued, "A lot of mystics tell you to go and find God within, in your heart. Well, that is a good way of finding God. But when they say God lives in us, that is only half the story. The other half is that 'we' live in God. We have Ahura's powers within us because we are Ahura. But we are Ahura expressing itself within itself in the experience of four dimensions as us. To put it another way, it is as if the five dimensional omnipresent, omnipotent entity is experiencing itself in the four dimensions with all the illusory boundaries and separations that exist, through us.

"Recognize that you are Ahura and Ahura is you and you are me and I am Ahura too. And that we are at the same time in the same place. We are also at the same time in all places all the time. Realise that in the perfection of the universe, we are one and we are all. We are everywhere, yet there is no 'where'. We are separate individual expressions of the one. And that the universe and all of us within it are immortal in the sense of being eternal or timeless, not in the sense of eternity or for ever and ever.

"That in the Plan, we are conceived as perfect and immortal, regardless of our actions. But we only reach perfect completion when we act perfectly and effortlessly, within the bounds of the Law, and with infinite benevolent love. That regardless of our four dimensional experiences, in the fifth dimension we are perfect and immortal, because we and Ahura are one," He concluded.

After taking some timeless time to digest all of this, I asked innocently, "Why are you telling me all of this?"

"Because you wanted to know more about my philosophy and my divine songs."

"What has this got to do with the 'Gathas'?"

"Well, you will easily confuse the essence of the 'Gathas', unless you understand where I am coming from," Zarathushtra responded.

"Why me?"

"Why not you? Besides, you asked."

* * *

We met again the following day, in the same patch in the forest. He made his grand entrance through the beam of light, just as he had the previous two days. But by this time I had got so used to it that I could not think of any other way for him to appear. It is funny how quickly we get used to supernatural phenomena.

I had thought very hard about many of the things he had said and had prepared all my questions for him. Questions about timelessness and spacelessness and having Ahura's powers in the four dimensions. I was also determined to direct the conversation to satisfy my thirst for this knowledge. I was ready for him.

When I saw him appear, I said, "Good morning." It was about 11 o'clock.

"Good morning," He replied, "there is a lake about half a mile from here which is very beautiful and serene. Shall we go there?"

"Sure," I said and we set off.

While walking towards the lake I asked him, "Do you only work in the Imperial system? I mean you were talking about yards on the first day we met and just now you referred to half a mile."

He was amused and said, "If you prefer the metric system I could just as easily have said it is about eight hundred meters."

How did he know all of these things? I dared again and asked him, "How do you know all these things?"

"It is one of the perks of being perfect," He smiled back.

"Seriously!"

"Well, if you are perfect and immortal like Ahura Mazda, you are not just omnipotent and omnipresent, but also omniscient. Remember one of the one hundred and one names of Ahura means 'All knowing'. So seriously, this is one of the perks of being perfect."

I decided to be quiet and enjoy the walk until we got to the lake. Then immediately I said, "OK. I have a lot of questions to ask about what we were discussing."

He interrupted, "Actually, a lot of what we were talking about was highly abstract. I prefer you to just sleep over them for a few days. In any case, we have discussed enough for you to try to look at the 'Gathas' from a different perspective. Five dimensionally."

"But there are a lot of questions"

"Most of them will be answered when we go through the songs," He interrupted.

Having no choice I resigned, "OK," while thinking: "So much for all the questions that I had prepared."

"Listen, please don't think that you have no choice," He was reading my mind again, "you have the choice to walk away from this discussion, now or at any time during our conversations. So if you are here, I will assume that is because you choose to be here."

I thought about what he said for a moment and responded, "You are right. I do want to be here. So what do you suggest we should talk about?"

"Let me ask you," He said, "what is your favourite prayer?"

"The Ashem Vohu," I said without hesitation.

"Why?"

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"Because it is short, to the point and full of meaning. It makes you think. But mainly because it is short!" I responded.

He smiled again with his by now familiar gentleness, "Tell me what does it mean to you?"

"Well, let me say it in English rather than the original language."

"OK."

I took a deep breath and said, "Righteousness is the best Good. It is bliss and happiness. Happy and blissful is he who is righteous for the sake of being righteous alone."

"Very good. Now what does it mean?" He said with a smile.

I realized that he was right. I could have been reciting this prayer out of some book that I had memorized. So I asked, "Are you sure you want to hear my interpretation?"

"I am sure."

"OK. Here we go..." I replied. "Being righteous and doing what is right is the best thing we can choose in our lives. It is this approach that will bring us joy and happiness and bliss in this life. But to truly experience bliss, we must do the right thing because it is the right thing to do. Not because we will be rewarded by becoming happy. You do what is right because it is right. You do not need any other reason for it. And if you follow this advice, as a byproduct of your actions and approach to life, you will also experience true joy and happiness and bliss. Well?"

"Very good. You really do understand this prayer," He answered while I was beaming with a broad smile. "Now tell me what is good? And what is right?"

"OK," I smiled shrewdly, "you are trying to get me into the old duality argument. Let me just say that to me, good and right is anything that is in line with the universal progress towards completion. It is how you are, or what you do with least entropy."

"Just to be sure that we are on the same wavelength, tell me what do you exactly mean by entropy?"

"I learnt this in my physics classes. They taught us that any physical interaction that takes place, starts from an initial state and ends at a final state. Now for this to take place, the process can happen in any number of ways. Let me give you an example."

"OK."

"Let's say you have a container divided into two halves which are separated by a partition. One half has some air at a certain pressure, and in the other half there is vacuum. Now let's say you want to share the air equally between the two halves. So the initial state is one half container of air at full pressure, and the other half is empty or at zero pressure. The final state is both halves of the container will be at half pressure. So far easy enough?"

"Yes," He smiled.

"Now, we have a number of ways to achieve this. The most obvious is to take the partition between the two away, so the gas redistributes itself evenly."

"That is the most obvious," He smiled again.

"Another way is to move the partition away from the vacant half, let's say 1/4 of the way along the container, and pressurize the full half of gas to a full quarter of the container at twice the pressure, and then take away the partition."

"Yes, I can see this is also one way to do it," He said calmly.

"A third way is to take the partition 1/3 way into the vacant half, then return it to its original position and then remove it."

"I get the picture. There are many, many ways of doing this."

"But you see, all of these ways, except the first and most obvious one in this case, are wasteful. They use energy to do unnecessary work. And all of the used energy contributes to the change in entropy, no matter whether it is useful or wasteful. So the path of least entropy is that of least waste. The path that creates the least amount of chaos. The effortless path. The graceful path."

"OK. I understand," He replied. "Now back to the question of duality. Tell me what is duality?"

"Well, according to what you said in the 'Gathas', ..."

He interrupted, "Let's forget about the 'Gathas' for now. Tell me your opinion. We will talk about the 'Gathas' later."

"OK. But my opinion is very similar to what you said."

"Good. Now tell me," He said calmly.

"Well, for us to exist in and experience the space-time continuum, in this physical world, we need to recognize things and distinguish them from one another. We use our five senses to achieve this, so we need a means of separating things. That to me is duality."

"Give me an example," He said.

"OK. Let me give some very obvious ones. During the day, when the sun is out, we say it is light. But at night we say it is dark. Duality is day and night, light and dark. You can't have one without the other. It is a way of separating, a way of distinguishing them."

"Go on ..."

"Darkness," I continued, "is nothing more than the absence of light. So now we can say it is either dark or light. There are different degrees of light and dark, nevertheless, there is separation because of the dual nature of light and dark."

"Very well put," He said and before I had the chance to gloat he added, "but what about Good and Bad? Which of the five senses do you use to distinguish what is good and what is bad?"

"OK. Now you are getting into ethical or moral duality. For this we use some or all of our senses, but we also use our creative and critical mind. We compare expected consequences with desired consequences."

"This is getting interesting," He said.

"You remember I said good is anything that is in line with universal progress towards completion?"

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He nodded.

"We use our creative mind to determine what is universal progress. Perhaps through intuition. Then we use our critical mind to figure out the consequences of our action or inaction. And then we compare those consequences with what we thought would be universal progress. If they are aligned, we call them Good. If not, we call them Bad."

"So what you are saying is that to have the experiences of the four dimensions in a joyous and blissful way, we use our creative mind to see what is desirable and in line with the Law. Then we decide which of our actions will potentially bring results in a way of least entropy, and which are also in line with the Law, the law of Progress, and we call them Good. Then we choose to perform those acts," He summarized.

"Yes."

"Definitely something to think about," He continued. "Let's meet here tomorrow and we will start talking about the `Gathas'."

"What? Finish so soon?" I asked with disappointment.

"It has taken us longer than you think. You have been experiencing timeless moments!" He smiled back and walked through his doorway of light.

* * *

At 10 o'clock the next morning I was at the lake. I had brought a copy of my favourite translation of the `Gathas' so I could use it as my reference. I assumed since he had written the songs, he would know what we would be talking about, but I should have something on paper to be sure.

I waited a moment for the light beam to appear, but nothing happened. I waited a minute more, and still nothing happened. Suddenly a wave of panic washed over my entire body. What if he was not going to show up today? What if I had completely lost contact with him?

I remembered that he said he would be here, and that reassured me a little. Then I decided to think of it logically. I realized that the past few days of our conversation was a unique experience for me. Although I would not be able to share it with most of my friends, because naturally they would think that I had gone crazy, I could still use much of the wisdom that he shared with me. I realized that I would cherish these brief meetings for the rest of my life, regardless of whether I would ever see him again, and for that I was grateful. Truly grateful.

I decided that since I had nothing to do, this would be a good opportunity for me to enjoy the beauty of the lake and perhaps even meditate a little. So I put my book down on a log and sat on the sandy beach. The sun was warming me up just enough so that I would neither be cold nor hot. And the chill of the morning had disappeared.

I started looking at the scenery and enjoying the freshness of the air and the beauty of nature. I was meditating on the calm and waveless lake, gazing into the distance. I was

not sure how much time had passed, I guess it was another timeless moment, when suddenly I noticed a figure walking in the distance, over the lake and coming towards me.

Although the scene startled me, the figure did not disappear. In fact he continued approaching me. Yes it was Zarathushtra. "Why am I startled?" I asked myself, "He could just as easily appear walking on water of the lake as stepping through a gateway of light." It is curious how quickly we become familiar with the strange, and yet how quickly we are startled by other unusual events. I even thought, "The very fact that I have been talking to a guy who died at least 3 millennia ago is strange. Why am I so easily startled by someone walking on water?"

"Good morning," said Zarathushtra, breaking my chain of thoughts.

"Good morning," I responded. "I thought you were not coming."

"Why did you think that?" He answered. "I was the one who asked us to meet here, wasn't I?"

"Yes, but time is not an issue for you. And since you did not show up on time, I thought you would not."

"Oh that," He said calmly. "I thought you wanted to meditate and I did not want to interrupt your meditation."

"That is a lame excuse," I thought to myself. "I only meditated because he did not show up." But then I remembered that he had a way of knowing things, even though I could not figure out how. "I suppose this is one of the perks of being perfect to know when somebody else is going to meditate, even if they don't know it yet," I said finally.

"Exactly!" was his only response.

I paused for some time, trying to figure him out. Then he gently said, "I see you have brought a book with yourself. I assume it is a translation of the 'Gathas'."

"Yes. You don't mind do you?"

"Not at all. Shall we begin?"

"Sure," I said. "Where do we start?"

"How about we go chapter by chapter. You ask me general questions about each chapter, and then we get to the specific verses."

"OK. But I have some general questions about the 'Gathas' that I would like to ask first."

"OK. I am listening."

"Wow," I thought, "this guy is not wasting any time today," and then asked, "My first question is: are we attributing the right chapters of the 'Yasna' to the 'Gathas'?" and thinking that I needed to explain, I said, "You probably know what has been handed to us is the 72 chapters of the 'Yasna' but our scholars only attribute 17 chapters to the 'Gathas', and those are all distributed in different places."

"Yes I know," He said. "The scholars have done a good job of isolating the chapters of the 'Gathas'. For the sake of our discussions you can assume that we are talking about the right chapters."

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"Well done guys!" I thought to myself and asked, "What about the order of the chapters?"

"Oh I don't remember," He replied casually, "but the order is not really that important. Each chapter stands by itself anyway, and is easy enough to understand. Let's just go with the order in the book that you have brought. And remember what is important is whether we understand the content or not. How it is packaged is of secondary importance."

"Right!" I said and paused.

"Are there any other general questions?" He asked.

"Not that I can think of now, but I will come back to them if I have any."

"OK. So let's start with the first chapter that you have. Which chapter is that?"

"It is chapter 28 in the 'Yasna'," I replied.

"OK. Chapter 28 it is," He said and paused.

"In this chapter we have 11 verses," I said quickly, collecting my thoughts as I was leafing through my book.

He nodded and waited.

"This chapter is kind of like an introduction. In the various verses you talk about what you are going to be talking about. You do a little invocation or prayer to Ahura Mazda to help you at the start of your work and throughout your days. You put a good word in, an acknowledgement if you will, for those who have been helping you along. And you kind of summarize a major part of your message."

"OK. How about each verse then?" He asked, "In fact the best thing is you tell me in your own language what each verse talks about."

"I knew you were not going to make it easy," I responded with a smile.

He smiled back but said nothing.

"OK. Verse one:" I continued, *'First of all Mazda, I pray that I will always remain truthful and righteous, and become and be wise, and have a clear and clean conscience. And by being so, I may do my work in line with the universal progress, the purpose of creation.'* How is that?"

"Simple enough," He replied, "but why do you think this has come first?"

"Well, what better place to start than acknowledging ourselves in relation to the Creator, setting guidelines and ethical objectives for ourselves and aligning our work with the universal purpose?"

"Right," He said calmly. "Let's go to verse 2."

"Look, if we want to do this verse by verse, we are going to be here for a long time," I replied. "Not that I don't enjoy your company, but let's face it, a lot of the things that you have been saying are repetitive, just trying to drive the point home. Can we not group things together and just go to the basic message?"

"OK," He said calmly without taking it personally. "Let's talk about the general message, and if we need more elaboration we will zoom in on the individual verses. I suppose that would be a more holistic approach."

"In fact I have a better idea," I said. "Let me ask you different questions about what is important today, and you can tell me what you think about each one."

"OK. And if that does not work, we can try something different," He agreed.

"I like the flexibility of this guy," I thought. "He is not at all attached to his way of thinking or for that matter even to his songs. I suppose that is another example of caring more for the content than the packaging."

As if reading my mind again, He said, "You must understand, what is important is the message not the messenger or means of transferring the message. What I really want to make sure about is that you understand the message, and if relevant for you, to apply it in your life."

"I like that," I smiled back.

* * *

"Then ask me whatever you want," He said.

"OK. My first question is that you were talking about all this abstract stuff, and every time I turn around, you simply give the message as if it only applies to the physical world. What about the spiritual world?" I asked.

"First of all you must understand that there is not much distinction between the spiritual realm and the physical one. In fact one is the mirror image of the other."

"I understand. The physical world is the reflection of the spiritual," I said knowingly.

"True. But that is again only half the story. The spiritual world is also the mirror image of the physical."

"Oh?" I declared my astonishment.

"OK. Imagine you have a two dimensional surface within a three dimensional volume. If you are sitting on the surface and cannot see the third dimension, your world is pretty limited, but if you are in the three dimensional volume, you can not only see the surface, but how it moves around within the volume, and how it turns around and twists and folds."

"Yes, but what has that got to do with reflections?" I asked.

"You see, the physical world is limited to its four dimensions. The spiritual world is also limited to its own dimensions. For the sake of our discussion let's call that the fifth dimension. So the spiritual world is limited to its dimension, being the fifth. But if you look at the whole picture from the five dimensions, you can see how the four dimensional physical world is interacting and moving in the five dimensions. You can also see how the spiritual dimension is moving and interacting in all the dimensions. Is this picture clear?"

"Yes, I think so," I responded still deep in my visual images of this abstract five dimensional world.

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"Try this. In our three dimensional picture, imagine you have two straight and flat surfaces that cross each other at a certain angle."

"OK, I see that."

"Now let's say that somebody has come and welded these two surfaces to each other where they cross. So the angle between them is fixed and they are rigidly attached to each other."

"Yes..."

"Now let's say I am standing inside this volume and holding one of the surfaces and am turning it around the line of weld." He then paused, and continued, "Now tell me what happens?"

"Well, the surface that you are holding will begin to turn, but so will the other one, because they are rigidly fixed to each other."

"Good." He continued, "Now what happens if I turn the other surface?"

"Same thing. It does not matter which surface you turn, they will both turn..... I see," I said with a flash of inspiration, "so what you are saying is that one of the surfaces is the physical plane and the other is spiritual plane, and if you turn either one of them, the other one will turn too."

"Precisely," He said, "and that is how in the five dimensional universe, the physical and the spiritual reflect each other."

"OK. I understand..."

"Now to go back to your question," He interrupted, "the reason that I was explaining things mainly in the physical plane was because I was a pragmatic man. I knew that I was dealing with a lot of people who at that time did not have any of the education or the comforts of today. And unless they knew how this philosophy or way of life would apply to their day to day affairs, they would neither have time nor any use for it."

"I understand. You know, you are a lot wiser than your age."

"You are forgetting that by your standards of time measurement, I am a few thousand years old," He responded jokingly.

"And I know you are immortal and timeless," I played along.

"And so are you my friend. You just don't realise it."

Why does he say things like that? So I asked, "Is it pragmatic to say things like this to me? Why do you say such things?"

"You are a lot more aware than the people of the time that I came to this world. Generally the people of your time have a far better knowledge base, and a lot more free time to ask questions of spiritual nature. They don't have to worry about next winter's food on the table, or the attack of the next army of looters or king's soldiers. You can devote more time to these things, and by having a better understanding of the entire universe, and I mean the five dimensional universe, you will value life and goodness a lot more."

"OK. I am sold on the idea. Shall we go to the next question?" I said impatiently.

"Sure."

"How did you come about this entire philosophy? I mean what made you go and seek things and eventually what gave you the inspiration?" I asked.

"When I was younger, I kept on thinking that there must be more to life than this. I mean we can't just be born, live, die, and become dust. So for a long time I was wondering what was going on. Then for another long period, I started contemplating the nature around me. I mean I looked at things and tried to see how they were created, how they grew, what they looked like, and if there was any order to them. And if there was order, then what was going to happen to them."

"And that was the time you went into nature?" I asked.

"Yes. You see, most people of my time would see a mountain and would think of it as an obstacle on their path, or as a source of water for their family, or as fertile ground for their herds. But I would look at a mountain and see its magnificence. I would contemplate how large it was, and how majestic it looked. I would look at the snow caps and contrast them with the trees or the green pastures at the foot of the mountain and enjoy its beauty. I would see its way of going through the cycle of seasons. I would notice how its colours would change at sun set or dawn. I would listen to the noises coming from the mountain at night. I would think of how many different plants and animals were dependent on the mountain for their existence and survival. I would look at the way people would cut a trek up the mountain and to the other side, only to find more mountains. And many other things. And this was just the mountain."

"I see."

"Then I would look at a tree and wonder how the seed of that tree generated a tiny plant which grew into such a large tree. How with spring, life would become active in the tree, and by summer it would be housing many birds and animals. How its fruits would sustain many other life forms. How autumn would see the tree shedding its leaves and waiting for another renewal, and how in winter it would dormantly contemplate the year that just passed, and it would plan for the new year. And that was just one tree."

"I understand," I said quietly. "And that is why in one of the chapters of the 'Gathas' you keep asking about the order and creation of different things. let me see ... yes, here it is. It is chapter 44, and in fact you have devoted twenty verses just to ask different things."

"Was it that many?" He said half smiling, "I suppose I wanted to drive my point home. Do you think I over did it?"

"Well, no harm done. It does get boring after a while, but you do make some very different points through these questions," I said trying to show him the positive side of it.

"You are right..... You see, when you contemplate nature, you can't help but realise that there is a natural order to the world. I mean the cycle of day and night, the seasonal cycle, birth-growth-death-decay-renewal. I mean when you truly contemplate things you will see that there is order. There are laws and principles. Just like you were mentioning, there is the Law."

"Perhaps this is a good time to elaborate on the Law, which I believe you called 'Asha'," I asked.

"Oh yes, 'Asha'. I remember I had so many problems trying to explain this to people. Let me see if I can make it any simpler now."

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"I'll promise to be a good student," I said, half jokingly.

"Yes," He smiled back. "Let me see. `Asha'. `The Law'. Well, when you realise that there is order in the universe, you also realise that this order must be based on certain unchanging and immortal principles. If the principles were changing, then you would not have order."

"You mean to say that we should not be flexible?" I asked.

"Not at all. What I am saying is that there are certain absolute principles that are independent of time or space. Otherwise they would not be able to regulate the physical world. You see, these principles must transcend the four dimensions to be able to work as a regulating and controlling means of an orderly physical world."

"I see," I said and paused. "Do you want to tell me a few of these principles?"

"Sure. In fact you named a few on the first day, and if you recall, I asked that we should discuss them further."

"Yes I remember," I replied. "The ones that I was mentioning were cause and effect, progress, interdependence and inter-reflection."

"Well, these are a good place to start."

"Let's start with cause and effect. The way I see this principle is that for every effect there was a cause, or like Newton said `For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction', or as the Bible says, `what you sow, you shall reap.' But all of these are within the confines of the physical world."

"Perhaps they can be interpreted that way, but there is more to it than that. Before I answer this however, tell me about interdependence and inter-reflection," He asked.

"OK. In my view, interdependence implies that everything in nature is interdependent with everything else. For example if we take the food chain, you have plants which receive their nourishment from the ground, and they in turn feed the lower animals on the food chain, which are hunted by higher animals on the chain and so on, until you get to the highest animals. When these animals die, their bodies decay and decompose and go back to earth, to act as nourishment for the plants and so the cycle goes on. Break the chain at any one part and you affect the entire flow of the chain."

"Very good," He said. "Can you now take the food chain and relate it to something else?"

"Yes. Let's say that we have an over-population of a certain animal which is eating all the vegetation that is available. After a while you get a shortage of food for this animal, but plenty of food for the animal that hunts it. So some of these will die of starvation while others will be hunted down more. Now this imbalance will gradually move up the chain and come back to earth. And so the balance will be restored. It is a very dynamic thing."

"True," He said, "but I was thinking of something bigger. Take it to a planetary scale."

"I was coming to that," I replied. "One of these animals is man who has been using the resources available to him more than just for food. For example we have been destroying forests at an alarming rate, and we have been polluting the environment considerably. What we have done to this ecological chain has thrown it completely off balance. And all of this is because we don't recognize the principle of interdependence."

"Continue..." He replied.

"Well, if we realized that everything is interdependent, then we would know that the more off balance we go, the harder it will come back to us in the future to restore itself. I mean polluting the oceans and destroying the plant life on the continental shelves has reduced the oxygen generating capacity of the planet. Destroying the rain forests is making the situation worse. Making all these plants and animals extinct is limiting the diversity of what is available on the planet. Whether they are a resource or not is irrelevant, because we are all interdependent. We have become so short sighted that long term for us is twenty years, maybe. What we should really do is think of our great great grand children that we will never see. Long term should be 500 years or even 1,000."

"I can see that you are very passionate about this," He said with his characteristic calm and gentleness. "Now tell me about inter-reflection."

"OK. What I have noticed is that when you look at things on a very large scale and very small scale, there are a lot of similarities. Like the atom resembles the solar system. Or the speed of the stars and those of sub-atomic particles are similar."

"What about at the medium range?" He asked.

"In fact there are a lot of similarities between different things at different scales. For example the spiral shape of a galaxy resembles the shell of a nautilus. Perhaps this is why the mystics said `As above, so below.'"

"Perhaps, but I get the feeling that there is more?" He asked.

"Yes there is. In fact the principle of inter-reflection says that the macrocosm reflects the microcosm and vice versa."

"Give me an example," He asked.

"OK. Let's take our society. Looking at the cities today, we find that kids are going to school carrying weapons. We see that the law enforcement has been strengthened considerably compared to what it used to be say fifty years ago, yet crime is running rampant in our cities and is now spreading to smaller towns and communities. Drug abuse is phenomenal and generally there is a social decay."

"I get the picture," He said.

"Then we look at the family, and we see more pronounced abuse of children or spouses. Physical and psychological. And we see much less communication within the family. We see a lot of loneliness even when people are in crowds."

"Yes," He said, which was my cue to move on.

"And then we look at our media reporting all the atrocities and the worst of the criminal behaviour. If there is a problem anywhere, the reporters generally get there before the police does. And the way news is reported is as if there is only bad news and worse news. There is never anything good about our society which gets on the headlines."

"So you say that it is the fault of the media?" He asked, I guess trying to provoke me.

"No. In fact it is nobody's fault, but everybody's responsibility. What I am saying is we see that the state of the society reflects the state of the family, and both of these are reported by the media. But also the state of the family reflects the state of the society."

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And the media reporting promotes and aggravates the already bad situation. This whole thing becomes a chicken and egg situation where everybody is blaming somebody else."

"So what do you propose?" He asked.

"That we should look at ourselves first. Once we have cleaned up our own act, then to take care of our family, and we will find that by default, we will create a better society, country and planet."

"I think I have read this somewhere..." He commented with a smile.

"Yes it was in the `Gathas' Chapter 31 verses 16 and 18," I responded.

"Please remind me what I said."

"Here they are," I said handing him the open book. "You tell me what they say."

"OK. Verse 16 says: *`I ask thee Mazda, if a person with a good mind and a strong body earnestly works for the progress of the home, city, and country, in line with the Law, will this person become one with thee? O Mazda, when and how will this wish be fulfilled?'* This is a pretty good and positive message."

"Go on to the next verse where it is to do with evil," I responded.

"Verse 18: *`Do not listen to the untruthful and wicked, because such a person shall drive the home, the village, the town and the country to destruction. It is our duty to resist such persons and fight them with our spiritual weapons of purity of mind and righteousness.'* I suppose to know what something is, we must also know what it is not."

"I guess you are right. It is not that negative after all," I replied.

"Hmm." He was pensive for a moment, perhaps contemplating whether he could improve the verses or not. Then he asked, "So what is your solution regarding the media?"

"First we have to stop accepting the garbage they are portraying. If we don't buy into what they present, after a while they will either go out of business or present what is useful and beneficial. Also because this is an inter-reflection, a two way reflection if you will, the media have to clean up their act too and come up with beneficial ways of reporting. We all need to take responsibility."

"I think I understand everything you said. Do you need to add anything else about interdependence or inter-reflection?" He asked.

"No. I have pretty much said everything I wanted to."

"OK. Then let me add a couple of points to this whole thing. Everything you said makes perfect sense, except that it is only limited to the physical plane. What I would add is that this principle applies to the entire five dimensional universe. Including the spiritual plane, and including the relationship between the physical and spiritual."

"Can you explain?" I asked.

"Not only is there interdependence on each one of these planes as you described it, but also there is an interdependent relationship between the physical and spiritual. One cannot exist without the other. Part of the reason you find emotional and social decay in the society today, you know, things like loneliness or the drug abuse or the violence problem, is because people have lost touch with their spiritual needs."

"What do you mean? We don't need some priest to tell us what is moral and what is immoral," I protested.

"True. But the point is if you have no spiritual basis to your life, then ultimately your life becomes meaningless." He must have seen my blank look because he explained, "You see, if there is no spiritual plane or at least no possibility or relevance of having one, then ultimately what happens is we are born, we live, we die, and that is the end. I mean we become dust. Grains of sand. Nothing. So what was the point of it all?"

"OK..." was my only response.

"Whereas if you come to understand that there is also a spiritual dimension to life, even if you don't understand it, you would think that perhaps there is a meaning to life but I just don't know it. At least you give yourself a chance."

"So what has meaning got to do with emotional and social decay?" I asked.

"Think about it. If there is no meaning to it all, then what difference does it make whether you act responsibly or not? Who cares if somebody blows up the entire world or not? Who cares about pollution and environmental destruction? Because after all, the lives of our great grand children are going to be just as meaningless as our own, so we might as well save them from ever having to face it."

"I see. So what you are saying is the spiritual dimension creates meaning for our lives," I said.

"What I am saying is that there is interdependence. Just as much as the spiritual dimension creates meaning in the physical, the physical gives purpose to the spiritual."

"Wow..." I paused pondering and then continued, "What about inter-reflection?"

"Well, similarly with inter-reflection, the spiritual and physical inter-reflect each other."

"Give me an example," I asked.

"OK, have you noticed how those who are generally appreciative of what they have in life, have more to appreciate?"

"No, but come to think of it, you may have a point," I replied.

"Well, generally when we are more optimistic and positive about our lives, our lives turn out better, and as a result we become even more positive and so on. This is a growing cycle of positive feedback which is only possible because of inter-reflection."

"Yes, but this is psychological and not spiritual," I said picking points with his argument.

"First of all, psychology is a modern attempt at trying to understand the soul. But secondly, if you believe in a creative power, a Creator and Sustainer, in whatever form, then you realise that there is order and there is purpose. You display your faith by acting in line with the purpose and within the bounds of the Law in an orderly manner."

"Yes?"

"That faith is a spiritual faith. It has no proof, and there is no rational reasoning behind it. Ultimately it is simply faith. A belief in a certain order in the universe which will create the results that you are seeking. That is spirituality, and that is the reflection of the spiritual dimension on the physical. Do you understand?" He asked.

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"I think so..."

"If you understand this, then you will be able to accept that the physical achievements and progress are reflected back into the spiritual dimension, strengthening the level of faith and belief."

"I see..."

"And that is what I mean by inter-reflection between the dimensions," He responded and paused for a few moments for me to gather my thoughts.

"Now let's go back to cause and effect," He continued.

"Yes, cause and effect," I reflected his comment.

"You recall I was saying that cause and effect is not just applicable to the physical plane?"

"Yes."

"What you will find is this: A lot of times something will happen on the physical plane without any apparent reason. An effect which seems to have no physical cause."

"Like what?" I demanded.

"Have you ever been driving, and suddenly you just decide to slow down for no reason, and a moment later you realized that you were just saved from a bad accident? Or have you ever heard the phone ring and you just knew who it was. You had absolutely no reason to know, but you just knew and sure enough it was that person? Have you ever thought about wanting to do something, and that same day or perhaps the next day you end up in a situation that leads you to doing that thing? Synchronicities. I believe that is what you call them. Seemingly unrelated and improbable coincidences."

"OK. I have. I get the point."

"Well, these events are not causeless. Their cause is in the spiritual dimension and their effect is in the physical."

"Wow..." I replied, "what you are saying has a lot of implications."

"Exactly. One more thing. There are also spiritual effects that have their causes in the physical plane," He replied.

"This is great. I like this format of discussion and I think it works. Shall we continue in the same way?" I asked.

"Sure, but we better conclude for today. We have been discussing a lot of material and you need to think about them. Let's meet here again tomorrow," He suggested.

"Before you go, can I ask you a personal question?"

"Yes..."

"How come your T-shirt never gets dirty? You have been wearing this same outfit everyday that we have met, and it never gets dirty," I said it finally.

He laughed and said, "Another one of the perks of being perfect." Then he continued "In fact I have a better idea. Are there any good coffee shops near where you live?"

"Yes. Georgio's cafe. But it is kind of trendy."

"Good. Let's meet there. I will dress appropriately," He replied and walked off over the lake and out of sight.

I was wondering how he was going to walk into the cafe tomorrow. Through the wall perhaps, or something strange. Then I went home.

* * *

That evening I sat still with a note pad in front of me and a pen in my hand, thinking about all the things he had said.

I was planning to write some questions about life in our day and age, and what Zarathushtra had to say about them. Then I remembered the last time I had prepared my questions, and how he completely ignored them.

So I decided to just think of what we had discussed, and let the conversation of the next day evolve as it would.

I slept like a baby that night.

* * *

I went to Georgio's cafe at 2:30 in the afternoon. There were a few people there, but it was not too crowded. I ordered a cup of coffee and sat down facing the front door. Zarathushtra was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly I felt somebody's hand on my shoulder. I turned around and was surprised again.

He had his faded jeans on, but this time he was wearing a bleached purple T-shirt with three ear rings through one ear and a ring through his nose. He sat down facing me.

I said, "The rings have got to go! You are overdoing it."

"And good afternoon to you too!" He replied.

"Yes. Hi. But they have got to go!" I insisted.

"Can I at least keep one ear ring?" He asked. "I like the way it feels."

"OK. But just one," I agreed reluctantly.

Then he covered his nose with one hand and his ear with the other, and as he removed his hand, the rings had disappeared, except the one ear ring. He simply put his hands on the table, but they were empty. No rings in them. For some reason I was not at all surprised. I think I would have been surprised if he had the rings in his hands.

"How did you get here?" I asked. "I mean where did you appear?"

"Oh, in the bathroom," He said casually.

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The waiter arrived with my coffee, and asked Zarathushtra for his order.

"Coffee please," He said calmly.

"What? I am surprised," I said. "You should look after your health."

"I do!" He replied. "Remember, I am perfect!"

Then we both paused, I guess each one waiting for the other to start. Finally he said, "I am surprised! You don't have any notes or questions to ask me?"

"Do you remember the last time that I did?" I replied. "You didn't even give me a chance."

"You give up too easily my friend. I suppose I'll take the initiative to start," He said. We then waited for the waiter to serve his coffee.

"This place is all right," He said.

"Yes it is. It may get very busy but nobody will listen to what we talk about," I replied and we both sipped our coffee a little.

Finally he started, "Yesterday we did not get to the law of Progress. Tell me what do you think it is?"

"I think that it simply says the world is progressing in an orderly manner towards completion. If you flow with the progress, you are going with the Law, if not, you are resisting or struggling against it."

"What does that imply?" He asked.

"For one thing, it implies that if you are struggling at what you are doing, check to see if what you are doing is in line with natural and universal progress or not."

"What else?"

"If you are thinking of choosing a job, or a relationship, or anything else, make sure it is progressive. In fact, in one of the verses you said: *'May we be among those who renovate and renew the world. May we work in accord with Asha and whenever we are wavering in our doubts, may we turn our hearts and thoughts to Ahura Mazda.'* It was chapter 30 verse 9," I said, closing my book.

"You see," I continued, "to me what you are saying is that since the world is going towards completion, always be a renewer of the world. One who works towards progress. Work according to the Law, Asha. And whenever in doubt, and there will be times of doubt, turn your mind and heart towards the Creator and the purpose of creation, which is progress. And move on."

"Good," He said. "And that brings us to Asha."

"So how would you describe `Asha'?" I asked.

"Asha is the sum total of all the timeless principles of the Universe. `The Law'," He said very simply.

"It makes sense," I responded. "Are there any other principles you can share with me?"

"Maybe later," He said. "Let's go to something else."

"OK," I jumped at the opportunity. "There is one topic which many books discuss and it has become a thorn in everyone's side."

"What is that?"

"The two spirits!"

"Oh that!" He said. "Well, I knew it would be inevitable, so tell me what is your question? We might as well deal with it early on."

"OK. A lot of books, scholars, and even encyclopedias claim that what you proposed was a dual system of belief. That from the beginning there was God and there was the Devil, which you called 'Ahriman'. What do you have to say about that?"

"Give me some evidence of this in the 'Gathas'," He replied calmly.

"OK," I said turning the pages. "Chapter 30 verse 3. You said: '*In the beginning there were the twin spirits, one was good and the other evil in their thoughts, words and deeds. And that the wise will follow the first while the unwise shall follow the way of evil and be lost.*' Then for the next six verses you compare the different choices, ways and consequences of each spirit."

"First you must understand this," He started patiently, "that there is a difference between 'evil' and 'devil', just as there is a difference between 'Good' and 'Creator'. Secondly there is a big difference between 'Spirit' and 'Creator'. Thirdly you are quoting me out of context. Now let me elaborate. Let's take your book here, go to chapter 30 and we will go through the verses and I will try to explain."

"OK," I said. "Here is chapter 30, verse 1...." showing him the page.

"I start by saying: '*Now I will speak of the two phenomena, to the wise one and those who want to find out. I shall explain about the Creative Mind, the plan, Asha, as well as how you can achieve perfection and have the light of knowing and bliss, yourselves.*' Would you agree that this is just an introduction?" He asked.

"Yes. Now we get to verse 2 which is perhaps the most quoted of your verses."

"I can see why it has an appeal. Here I talk about the principle of choice. Remember that I was speaking to the crowds who had gathered to listen to my message. I say to them: '*With your most attentive ear and your most thoughtful and open mind, listen to my message. Then consider it carefully, each one of you for yourself. Because each of you constantly faces a choice between good and evil. I recommend that each of you choose the way of the Good before you leave the physical plane.*' Easy enough, right?"

"Right," I replied turning the pages in the book. "In fact in chapter 31 verse 11 you talk about the same thing. Look here it is."

"Yes. It is different though, in that it does not give a choice between this or that. Instead, it explains the total freedom of choice that we have. In this verse I said: '*From the very beginning, Ahura Mazda created us in two complementing natures, physical and spiritual, soul and body. We were given mental power and wisdom. We were also given the power to act and speak and teach. And we were given the complete freedom to choose our physical path and spiritual faith.*' You see, here I am not talking about consequences, but about our endowments. About our ability to choose. Our complete freedom in making our choices."

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"I understand. Now shall we go back to the controversial 30:3?" I asked.

"Sure. Now in the context of freedom of choice between good and evil I say: *'The dual spirit or mentality on the physical plane, from the very beginning was Good and Evil. Our thoughts, words or deeds could be either good or evil. The wise will choose the right spirit or mentality. They will be good. But the unwise shall make the mistake of choosing the wrong or evil mentality.'* In other words, what I am saying is that in my judgement, it is wise to adopt the good mentality. Is it clear now? There is no 'Devil'. There is no conspiracy to drive you astray. You have complete freedom of choice. Choose the right path."

"I understand and thank you for clarifying it for me."

"In verse 4," He continued, "I expand on this notion and say: *'When this duality was conceived, the first outcome was life and non-life or false and purposeless existence. Those who had chosen the evil mentality shall face the worst mental situation as the consequence of their choice. While those who choose truth and Good, shall enjoy the best mental comfort and spiritual state. And this situation shall continue for ever.'* In other words, here is the principle of cause and effect. If you choose good, you face good consequences, if you choose evil, you face evil ones. And this principle is timeless. For as long as there is time, it will continue."

"Carry on..." I requested.

"In verse 5 I give some examples: *'The unwise choose the worst actions, but the wisest, those who use their purest creative mind and their ultimate knowledge and wisdom, choose the Truth. Also the person who chooses beneficial actions with full faith, and for the sake of progresses, chooses the truth.'* Or to put it another way, use your purest mind, your intuitive and acquired wisdom, have faith and choose progressive action, because it is the right thing to do."

I nodded and sipped my coffee.

"Verse 6: *'The followers of the evil mentality made the wrong choice because of their doubts. They doubted because of their fear or their anger. These are the cause of all evil, and destroy the peace of mind of the people.'* This does not need any further explanation."

I smiled in agreement.

"Verse 7:" He continued, "*'One who has spiritual strength, good thoughts, purity of conscience, love for all, and faith, shall have strength and stability of mind and body. Such a person shall undoubtedly be successful in life's challenges. And shall be considered as one who serves Universal Progress, and lives the purpose of his/her life.'*

"Verse 8: *'When followers of evil mentality face the consequences of their choice, they will then realise the power of the Creative Mind. They will also learn how they can correct their ways and choose to abide by the Law.'* So you see, even if you have chosen a false mentality up to now, you can realise your wrong ways and remedy them immediately. How does it sound so far?" He asked.

"Good," I said while he sipped his coffee. "I have not lost you yet!"

"Earlier on, you gave me a version of verse 9. All I want to add is that this verse says: *'Those who have chosen the good mentality always work towards progress and*

completion, and whenever they face doubt, they go back to the source of their inspiration. Ahura Mazda. The Creative Mind. And Universal Progress."

"I understand."

"Verse 10: *`When all those of evil mentality have seen the consequences of their choices, taken responsibility, and convert to the way of Good, then they eliminate all evil. And that is when the desire of all those following good mentality will be fulfilled. Then, all shall live by their creative mind and according to the Law. That is like heaven. That is heaven.'*" He continued, "Notice that heaven is a consequence of our choices. It is a state of being."

I nodded.

"Verse 11: *`If we all realize and understand the laws of happiness and misery, and if we realize that evil mentality will bring us suffering, and goodness will bring us abundance, then we all know exactly what to choose. By our nature, we will automatically be saved from misery and delivered into happiness.'*" I suppose it is apt to have this as the last verse of this chapter, because it is a fitting conclusion. It says that the dual spirit, good and evil, will bring dual consequences, happiness or misery. This is the Law. Cause and effect. And we have the choice. And if we use our right mind, there is only one desirable conclusion."

"But you are assuming we will use our right mind," I said.

"Sooner or later we will," He replied. "Let's go somewhere else. I'd like to catch some fresh air."

"OK. Where shall we go?"

"To the park around the corner."

I did not even bother to think how he knew there was a park there. Somehow I trusted his choice and did not doubt his knowledge.

* * *

"Boy that was a marathon," I said while walking to the park.

"Yes. I don't enjoy this kind of long philosophising. You know, when it is just a monologue," He responded. "But I guess it was necessary to explain this duality issue. I have been misunderstood and misquoted so many times. It is very frustrating."

"I understand."

"I hope we won't need to repeat this again."

"So do I," was my only reply. By now we had reached the park. It was sunny and warm. We picked a bench. As soon as we sat down, I noticed a homeless person passing in front of us. We both looked at her and then I asked, "You keep on talking about the freedom of choice. Do you want to tell me that this person chose to be homeless? Are there no circumstances that happen to you which are beyond your control? Which you did not choose?"

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"Sure there are," He replied, "you must not confuse the principle of choice with what happens to you."

"What do you mean?"

"What freedom of choice implies is that in the face of any event or external situation, you are still the master of your mind. You can choose to think whatever you want. You can interpret the events in any way that you please. And you can choose how you are going to respond to them. The principle of choice is not about blaming yourself. It is about taking responsibility for your life."

"Tell me how this applies to the bag lady that we just saw?" I asked.

"OK. Let's assume that she just left an abusive relationship, and is addicted to the alcohol that she was drinking to make her forget her pain. And let's also say that she is afflicted with terminal illness, and does not have a penny to save her soul. Is that miserable enough?"

"It is a starting point," I replied shamelessly. "Now what can she choose? She does not have many options, does she?"

"Yes and no. She does not have many options but she does have enough."

"Go on..." I challenged him.

"The first thing she should do is to stop living in the past. She should not think that she was chosen for a life of misery. It was not in her genes to be homeless, and even if she thinks it was in her karma, she could transcend it. She was not born a sinner and this state of affairs is not her payback for her sins. Nowhere was it written that she should live like this. She should also recognize that the past is finished; at least in the four dimensions it is. She is not going to change the past."

I was listening intently, wondering where this was leading to.

He continued, "Then she should realize what she is facing is the consequence of her choices in the past. But this is not to be taken as blaming herself. There is no point in blaming. Nothing can be achieved. Blaming is a result of guilt which comes from fear. And as you remember from verse 6 that we were discussing, fear leads to the unwise choice."

"So what do you gain by analyzing your past and the consequences that you are facing?" I asked impatiently.

"Two things," He replied calmly. "First that if your past choices created your present consequences, then your present choices will determine your future consequences. That no matter how bad it is or it seems to get, there is a way out. This is what verse 8 talked about where it said: *'When the followers of evil mentality face the consequences of their choices, they will then realise the power of Creative Mind.'* The key is to 'face' the fact that these are the consequences of our choices."

"And what is the second thing that you learn?" I asked.

"The second thing that you get by analyzing your choices is that you will learn what didn't work for you in the past, and so you will not repeat the mistake. This is the other

part of verse 8 which says: '*They will also learn how they can correct their ways and choose to abide by the Law.*' makes sense?" He asked.

"Sort of. We dealt with blame, but how does responsibility come into the picture?"

"Responsibility is the choice. You can either choose to become a victim of your inaction, or you can choose to take responsibility for the rest of your choices and therefore your future."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean by not making a decision to do something about your circumstances, you choose to accept the status quo, and so you become a victim of your inaction."

"Give me an example," I asked.

"Let's take the case of our bag lady," He responded. "Let's say she realises that continuing to drink does not help, but she is addicted. She can start searching various shelters and churches and other organizations to help her overcome her addiction. In this way, she will also save so much money that her penniless state will be alleviated. At least there will not be any leaks, even if there is no money coming in. She can try to look for work or some way of generating some income for herself."

"What if she can't find a job?" I interrupted.

"I did not say a job. I said work. Even if the work does not pay her any money, it will keep her attitude healthy and active, and her health may improve too. And eventually she will be able to perform some kind of work which will generate her some income."

"What about her terminal illness? How can she heal that?" I asked.

"The point is that even if her illness is not healed, she will live a much better life, in a better mental and spiritual state for the remaining days of her life, instead of a miserable and purposeless existence."

"I guess you have a point here. After all, we are all going to die some day," I responded.

"Unless we become perfect and choose to remain in the four dimensions. But then again, when you become perfect, you do not want to remain here for ever," was his puzzling and cryptic reply.

We paused for a while, and I was pensively silent. Then he said, "Let's meet at the lake tomorrow. Maybe we can rent a boat or something."

"OK," I replied waiting to see how he would disappear this time.

He simply walked into the public bathroom in the park and closed the door behind him.

* * *

The next day at the lake, I waited looking for him to appear over the water. But he came from behind, startling me.

"I didn't mean to startle you," He apologized.

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"No problem."

"Let's go and rent a boat," He said and started walking along the lake shore.

I followed and rapidly caught up with him. Then I asked, "What do your teachings say about the environment?"

"You have the book. you tell me," He replied.

"Let me see. You make a few references to Mother Earth, but other than saying we should respect it and act in accordance with the Law, and in a loving manner, you don't say much else."

"Well?" He responded.

"Look, tell me what do you mean by verse 5 and 6 of chapter 48," I handed him the open book.

"Verse 5 appeals to the fourth emanation, love and faith. *'O love and faith, save us from tyrants and bad rulers, and let the good and just who is guided by wisdom and good and clear mind, rule over us. We must toil for Mother Earth and the progress of the world, hence leading all creatures to light and truth.'* Effectively this verse says that we must do what is in line with the law of progress. Included in this is what is right for the planet and all creatures on it."

"What do you mean by 'light and truth'?" I asked.

"We will discuss this in a different context later," He replied. "Now to verse 6: *'Love and faith are our safety and security. They bring strength to our soul and renew our lives. These are the true attributes of the pure mind. Creator covered Mother Earth with vegetation and food for people since the beginning of life. Such is the wisdom of the Creator and the timelessness of the Law.'*"

"This is a pretty utilitarian approach to the environment and the root of what is causing all of our troubles today," I protested.

"First of all, this verse describes the interdependence of life, vegetation, creatures and humanity, all with Mother Earth. Second, if you notice both these verses start with appealing to love and faith. How can you be loving towards Mother Earth and abuse it? Third, they both refer to the pure mind, which tells us to ask our conscience and intuition to create the 'Good Plan' in our approach to the environment."

"OK. I am convinced. But why did you have to make it so cryptic? Why did you not come right out and say do this, don't do that?" I asked.

"Now we get to the core of my philosophy, which is taking responsibility to think clearly. We can talk about this later. Let's rent a boat," He said.

I suddenly realized that we were in front of the boat rental office. We rented a rowing boat for two and put on our life jackets, got in and started rowing. Of course I paid for the rental because there is no money in the fifth dimension.

* * *

When rowing away from the shore, I asked, "You can walk on water, how come you have to put on your life jacket?"

"You can too! Why do you?"

"I am serious!"

"When on earth, do as the earthlings do," He replied with a smile.

We were in the middle of the calm lake before we spoke again. He asked me to stop rowing. Then he pointed to the serene landscape and said, "Have you ever thought how all this came about?"

"Sure I have. We have learned about the time earth was a mass of molten rock cooling down. Then came the solidified surface with its many volcanic activities. Then the rains began, creating the bodies of water...."

"No, no, no," He interrupted. "I mean have you ever thought how all of this was created and maintained? Where did the order come from? How were the laws of universe created? What triggered the creation of life? What created the creativity and consciousness in human beings?"

"Oh you mean like you asked in chapter 44?" I asked.

"Yes! Have you ever contemplated this?"

"As a matter of fact I have. Well, not exactly in the way you ask the questions. I mean some of them are in too much of a poetic language. They are too metaphorical to take them literally."

"Exactly!" He replied. "The point is to not get bogged down with the language that I used to ask the questions. Language that describes the galaxies as heavens and so on. The point is to look at nature. Any part of it that you want. The sun, the moon, the skies, the waters or the winds, the plants or animals, the mountains or mankind. Then to ask yourself what was the intelligence behind all of this? Was this all a spontaneous result of a cosmic accident? Or is there an order to the world?"

"Well, a lot of the order can be described mathematically," I replied.

"Yes but what or who decided that the order should follow these mathematical laws and not some other ones. What about the very beginning? Who decided to start all of this? Can a cosmic accident happen out of nothing?"

"OK Z. I understand the questioning. But what is your point?" I asked.

"The point is unless you start contemplating such questions, you cannot begin to know the fifth dimension."

"All right. Let me tell you about some of my contemplations, since you described yours in the 'Gathas'."

"Please do," He said with much joy in his voice.

"When I studied human anatomy in my high school biology, I was amazed at the complexity of the system. How nerves and hormones would try to regulate all aspects of the body with an adaptive and dynamic feedback control system. How the blood circulation system would move massive amounts of food and oxygen, and make sure that

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every cell of the body would receive nourishment. And the same system would carry the waste away. How the autonomic nervous system coexisted with our brain's voluntary functions. And so on and so on."

"Yes..." He said enthusiastically.

"I could not help but marvel at the level of intelligence that had gone into the design of such an amazing organism. It is by far more complex and wonderful than the most sophisticated space crafts of our time. It is simply amazing."

"That is exactly what I mean," He replied. "How can there be so much intelligence all around us without there being an intelligent creative force? It is just too improbable for all of this to happen as a result of a cosmic accident."

"So why do you tell me all of this in the middle of this lake?" I asked.

"Because this is the perfect place to tell you. Look around. Observe. Take your time to experience the magnificence of all of this intelligence. Feel it and know it for yourself." He continued, "Nobody can tell you about the Creator and convince you of its existence. You have to experience it for yourself. And this is a good way of doing it."

"But I thought 'You could see God in a raindrop'. You don't need all of this."

"Of course you can. Just like you saw God in the human anatomy," He replied. "But to see this much magnificence, all in one place, is to satiate all your senses and your mind and soul. The essence is the same, but why not indulge yourself in all of this? Just be here for a while and experience the majesty of Ahura Mazda with the six emanations. This is perfection and immortality."

* * *

We must have been there, in the middle of the lake, for more than an hour, because we returned the boat late and I had to pay for another hour. But it was worth it. The experience was wonderful. I was joyful and so much more energized. I was also a lot more alert and much sharper in my mind.

Zarathushtra said, "I think we can now discuss the question that you asked earlier, since you seem to be a lot more alert."

"Which one?" I asked quickly with a smile.

"Very good," He smiled back. "When you asked me about the cryptic nature of my teachings."

I simply nodded.

"Well, when I was inspired in my search, and realized the experience of how the universe worked, I had to overcome a few challenges."

I simply listened.

"First of all I was talking about eternal or timeless laws and processes. Second, the language was limiting. Third, I had to make sure that it could all be absorbed in a gradual

and progressive manner, if necessary; that it would allow different levels of interpretation."

"You mean being diplomatic and covering your back?" I asked.

"Not at all. What I mean is that people who were at a simpler stage of spiritual development could interpret the songs in a way that would help them progress, while at the same time, the more advanced along their path could also benefit."

"I see."

"These three issues caused the `Gathas' to be written as divine songs. As poetry."

"Yes, I understand," I said. "Even today what the scientists cannot explain, the poets can try to describe."

"Precisely," He responded. "But the only reason I did not give any prescriptive guidelines, you know, do this, don't do that, was because each prescription is only applicable to its own situation. But timeless principles are applicable always and in every situation."

"Give me a practical example," I asked.

"OK. Back in my days, premarital sex would have led to unwanted pregnancy and was considered a taboo. Then a few decades ago safe and effective birth control means were created. So premarital sex became the norm, and was OK. The promiscuous attitude of many lead to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, some of which are deadly. So now, premarital sex is not of itself bad, but unsafe sexual practices could be deadly."

"So are you saying the premarital sex is good or bad?" I asked.

"I am not saying either way. That is your own individual choice. But I am trying to illustrate clearly what I mean by timeless principles."

"Go on..." I urged.

"OK. The prescriptive solution is to say do not practice premarital sex, then do, and finally only do if safe."

"Aha..."

"But the timeless principle, without getting into the spiritual aspects of it, would be `look after your physical and emotional health, as well as the health of those around you.'"

"OK. Now let's just stay in the four dimensions, without getting to the moral implications. I understand about your own health, but what do you mean by the health of those around you?" I asked.

"I mean the physical and emotional health of your partner, your families, and the possible outcome of the intercourse, the baby."

"You have to consider a lot of things, don't you?"

"You bet. Remember interdependence? We are all interdependent," He replied.

"OK. I think the illustration is graphic enough. But I think there is more to it than you have said so far."

"There is," He replied, "but let's sit down for a while and talk."

* * *

Sitting on a log, he faced me sitting in the sand, and started. "Do you remember that I said the main point of this philosophy is to take responsibility?"

"Yes..."

"The way I look at it is that all of us human beings are endowed with the same gifts: The ability and the right to fulfil our potentials."

"But we don't all have the same potentials." I protested. "What about those who are physically or mentally handicapped?"

"First of all I said that we have the right to fulfil `our' potentials and not somebody else's. Second, we may not all have the same physical tools, but spiritually we all have the same potential. That is, in our own way, to do what is right, with full conviction, power, love and faith, and to help the progress of the world towards its completion. We are all able to act according to the law of progress, and in this way achieve perfection and immortality."

"O..K....." I said hesitantly.

"And since we and Ahura are one, and made of the same essence, we are also given the choice to think, speak and act according to our choosing."

"All right. So we are all endowed with the potential to achieve perfection and immortality. And we all have the freedom to choose whatever we think, speak or do," I summarized.

"We are also endowed with a conscience. Even the mentally handicapped have an instinctive understanding of what is right and good, and what is not."

"Let's assume that you are correct..." I nudged him along.

"Then we are all responsible to make our choices, and we are responsible for the consequences of our choices," He replied.

"OK. So we are responsible. But what do you `do' with all of this?" I asked.

"Look, I am not responsible for your life or your choices. You `do' what you like with it. In the `Gathas' I have given you all the tools that you need. Now you go and do what is appropriate for you," He said forcefully.

"I don't understand. And what tools are your referring to anyway?" I asked.

"The `Gathas' is not about prescriptions. It is not about what you `do'. It is about a way of looking at life," He said gently.

"A way of looking at life?" I asked very puzzled.

"Yes. If you can change your paradigm, and look at life and universe from this perspective, then you will see that you have all the answers in every situation. All you need to do is see the situation clearly and apply the right solution to it."

"You mean I don't `do' anything with the `Gathas'?" I asked not believing what I just heard.

"Right now in your life, when you face any situation that requires a response from you what do you do?" He asked.

"Well, I evaluate the situation, use my best wisdom, make a decision, and respond accordingly."

"What determines your best wisdom?" He asked.

"I suppose my current paradigm. My beliefs, experiences, and what I have learned."

"What if you are wrong?"

"Then I am wrong."

"But if you are wrong, why did you respond in that way in the first place?" He asked.

"Because at that time, I did not have enough information or experience to show me that I was wrong. I will simply learn and move on, and will correct my ways in the future. Look, if at the time I thought it was the wrong choice or decision, I would not have chosen it. I may be ignorant but I am not stupid."

"So what you are saying is that based on your current paradigm you make the best choice. If you are wrong, it is because your current paradigm is limiting you."

"Yes," I replied.

"Good. And if you see your mistake, you try to correct the information or belief and shift your paradigm to a more expansive one for your future choices."

"Exactly."

"Wonderful. That is what you do with the 'Gathas'," He replied.

"What?"

"You read the divine songs and you try to understand them the best way you can. And hopefully it will help you move into a more expansive paradigm. One which is empowering, positive and hopeful. One which says you can attain Ahura's powers, that you can have a life of joy and bliss. That you can create heaven here on earth. One that makes you realise that we are not limited to our five senses and this physical four dimensional universe."

"I see," I replied. "And because you see things from a more expansive paradigm, your responses and your thoughts and words and deeds will be more appropriate."

"You got it."

"So you shift paradigms, because you can't be everywhere with everyone to tell them how to respond to every situation."

"Wrong!" He replied. "But let's start walking again."

* * *

"I don't get it!" I protested.

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"The first part of what you said was correct. Through the message of the 'Gathas' I have been shifting paradigms."

"You mean to say you are everywhere with everyone, in every situation, telling them how to respond?" I was completely confused.

"Wrong again. If I did that, then you would not have any choice," He replied. "But let's take it one step at a time."

"Please!" I begged.

"Remember the other day I was telling you that we are all one?"

"Yes."

"Remember I said that you and I are one, and I and Ahura are one, and Ahura and you are one?"

"Yes," I replied, "I remember, but I don't understand."

"OK. Let me describe it another way. Imagine an ocean with many waves. Different size waves. Different shapes too. Some are big and some are small ripples, some are rolling, some foaming, some just bobbing up and down."

"Yes. I can see that," I replied.

"In the four dimensional plane, we are like the waves on the ocean. Effectively we have different shapes and sizes and forces and are present in different places at different times. But our essence is the ocean. We are one with the ocean. We are the ocean. We are also the wave. Depending on how you look at it. And when we die, we are like the wave that has hit the shore. We lose our shape but not our essence which is the ocean. Do you understand?"

"I think so," I replied slowly.

"Well, in the four dimensions, you are manifested the way you look, but your essence, your soul, your spiritual dimension is the same as Ahura. And so is mine and so is this lake and this tree and this mountain. We are all one. Our essence is all one. We are Ahura."

"I guess it is like how quantum physics describes everything. That at a sub-atomic level, everything is just energy."

"There is more to it than simply energy," He replied, "but we will discuss that later."

"OK....."

"Now you see that I, Zarathushtra, am the same as Ahura, the infinite, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, the supremely wise. And we are all the same as you. And so I or Ahura is present everywhere, with everyone, to tell them how to respond in every situation. We can be all of this. But we do not tell anyone how to respond unless they ask. We can, but we don't unless asked. Now is it more clear?" He asked.

"Yes. But why?"

"Because if you are told without asking, then it negates your freedom of choice. To deny you your freedom of choice is to deny Ahura the same freedom, and to deny everyone

else that same freedom of choice. Because your essence is the same as Ahura's. Because you and Ahura are one. Because you and everyone else are one."

"I see...." I said hesitantly.

"To deny a wave the freedom to move forward is to deny the ocean its freedom of movement. And that is to deny every wave on that ocean or in any other ocean the freedom of movement," He explained.

"I understand, but I need some time to digest this."

* * *

We were walking in silence for sometime. Then I asked Zarathushtra, "Are you familiar with the Internet?"

"Yes," He said calmly.

"So what you are saying is that we are all like sites on the net. But the Internet is the sum total of all of its sites and servers."

"Go on..." He encouraged me.

"All the information on the net is available to everybody. But unless you ask for a specific information from your site, you are not going to receive it."

"You got it!" He replied. "But it does not reduce your potential, your ability to retrieve any of the information that you choose. Your site is endowed with the same potential as every other site, but you have to decide how you are going to utilize and fulfil that potential, and you are responsible for what you get on your screen."

* * *

"You mentioned that the `Gathas' gives all the tools that we want," I said after taking sometime for contemplation of the last point.

"Yes."

"What did you mean?"

"You remember that I said the `Gathas' is supposed to shift your paradigm?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, after you shift your paradigm, you will need tools and techniques to operate from that paradigm."

"Like what?" I asked.

"Let me give you some examples. In many of the verses I refer to the Good or Pure Mind. By this I mean the mind that is connected to its essence, to Mazda."

"How do you achieve this connection?" I asked.

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"By using your mind's total capabilities. Its rational and non-rational aspects. You use your logic and power of analysis, but you also use your intuition and power of synthesis. You get your mind cranking and working, but you also get it quiet and listening or looking for insight, inspiration and intuition. You concentrate, contemplate and meditate. You also pray. That is another way of getting in touch with the infinite."

"How do I pray?" I asked.

"Let me go to verse 34:12 which describes this. It goes like this: *'What is thy rule and plan for progress? How should we pray and worship thee? Show me clearly, so that by following thy instructions we may benefit from the rewards that await us. Teach us Mazda the path of good thought and self-actualization.'*"

"But all you are doing is asking a question which says how do I pray?"

"Well, that is exactly it. You can either ask the same question and see what answers come to you, or you can see the twist in this verse. The very question is the method of praying. In other words you can pray by simply and directly asking questions from Mazda, the source of your essence. Then be silent and listen until you are inspired."

"I understand," I responded. "What other tools?"

"The emanations that you were discussing. The creation of the Good Plan by using your Good Mind, the understanding and following of the Law, the active pursuit through your thoughts, words and deeds, the tools of Love, the benevolent love, and Faith, spiritual faith. The tool of belief. Believe in perfection and immortality and you will create it."

"What did you mean by 'active pursuit through your thoughts'?" I asked.

"I mean constantly keeping the Good Plan in your thoughts. Visualising it, seeing it, affirming it, believing that it is going to happen. I also mean controlling your thoughts actively to leave no room for fear, anger, guilt or doubt, or any other negative thoughts."

"What other tools?" I asked with a childish persistence.

"At a simpler level, the 3 G's as you called them; Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds."

"Yes you talked about this in verse 47:1. Here, tell me," I asked giving him the open book.

"*'One who is led by pure mind and love, has good thoughts, words and deeds, aligned with the Law. He shall reach perfection and eternal life through his spiritual strength and love.'*" He simply read.

"What else?" I asked, thinking that I had exhausted the tools.

"Getting together and forming alliances with other people who share your thoughts. This is what I was doing when I was trying to propagate the message. I think somewhere in your translation it may refer to the Society of the Magi, or the Brotherhood. Well, these were the people who saw what I saw and were helping me in propagating the message."

"Try verse 46:16," I asked giving him the book again.

He took the book, scanned the verse and said, "OK. Let me first explain that Farashoshtra was one of my first allies and friends on the path. *'Farashoshtra, guide the faithful to perfection and eternal light, as both of us share the same wish, to reach the place where*

truth and love and faith are, and good mind and spiritual strength never diminish, where we will find Ahura Mazda."

After a brief pause I said, "I can see how you are creating a vision of your common objective. It is all kind of like what Napoleon Hill called the 'Master Mind Group'."

"Well, a timeless principle applies in any era and by any name," He replied. "I think this gives you enough food for thought. Let's meet here again tomorrow, and we will go for a hike."

"OK," I replied and this time I walked off before he could disappear.

* * *

That evening, although I was exhausted from our discussions, I decided to read the 'Gathas' one more time. But this time I was reading the whole thing in a different light. Somehow it had a different meaning for me.

I noticed in many places he was asking for mental power as a means of reaching success in his quest. In 29:10 he was directly asking Mazda to "*Grant Zarathushtra mental powers and full wisdom, so that he may lead the world to peace.*" In 31:17 he asked Mazda to "*Let pure mind be revealed to all.*" In 34:3 he said, "*May all that live according to thy rule reach perfection through pure mind.*" And in 43:4 he says, "*My soul shall feel thy strength, when I experience the full power of pure mind.*" And so on and so forth.

I also saw the many references to our having Ahura's powers. For example, in 31:6 he said, "*Undoubtedly he shall enjoy Ahura's powers, which are attained through pure mind.*" Again in 34:5, "*I wish to be one with thee and become thee through truth and pure mind.*" And in 43:3, "*This path leads us to the world of truth, where we shall find Ahura. The followers of truth and thy devotees shall ultimately become one with thee through wisdom and holiness.*"

The concept of becoming one with Ahura and having Ahura's powers kept repeating in different forms throughout the various chapters. In verse 44:17 he asked, "*Tell me truly, O Ahura, how shall I be guided by thee to achieve my supreme goal of reaching Mazda and becoming one with thee?*" and in 50:7 he says, "*I shall gratefully enter thy realm and join thee through truth and pure thought.*"

Not to kill the point, I decided to study other aspects of the 'Gathas' that we had discussed too. I noticed a few points. One was that he kept repeating his questions, his doubts and his message. Another was that this was a very aggressive philosophy, constantly talking about fighting the wicked and destroying evil. It very much contradicted the appeal to Love in the fourth emanation. I thought I should ask him these questions the next day.

I managed to sleep very well that night and woke up early and refreshed. So I picked up my book, my favourite translation of the 'Gathas' with all of my 'post it' markings and headed for our rendez vous point.

* * *

As I got to the lake, I noticed that he simply materialised out of thin air. Kind of like Star Trek movies. But I just shrugged the event off and said, "Good morning!"

"Good morning," He replied. "Are you ready for a brisk hike?"

"Yes, but I prefer a slow one so we can talk too," I replied.

"OK. We'll go slowly. Did you sleep well?"

"Yes. Like a baby."

"I thought so. This is the effect of contemplating and being with nature," He explained.

"I thought it was because of our heavy discussions yesterday."

"Yes. That too," He answered and dropped the subject.

"Which way are we going?" I asked.

"To the top," He said while pointing to the glorious peak in front of us. It was a fairly easy climb. Or at least it looked that way. Then he added, "It is kind of symbolic. Hopefully today, we shall reach the apex."

I was not sure what he meant, but did not pursue it either.

We headed into the woods, hiking on the gentle slopes by a river. He was leading the way, and I was comfortable with that. After all, he was Zarathushtra.

"Do you have any questions?" He asked.

"Yes. As a matter of fact I do."

"Shoot," He challenged me.

"OK. Why was your message so aggressive?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you kept talking about the power of the Good, then about how nasty the evil were. You kept painting these ugly pictures of what the evil would try to achieve. And you kept on mentioning" I had to pause to catch my breath since the climb was getting steeper by the minute. Then I continued, "You kept on mentioning that we have to side with the good and fight the wicked until we destroy all evil. I mean whatever happened to Love?"

"I see. You have been reading the `Gathas' again, haven't you?" He asked mockingly.

"As a matter of fact I have, and I am serious too," I replied.

"OK. Then let's take it one step at a time again," He stopped, chose a rock by the rushing stream, and sat down on it.

I sat down too, grateful for the opportunity to catch my breath and rest a little.

He then continued, "Do you remember when we were talking about duality?"

"Yes."

"And you gave me the example of light and dark?"

"Yes!"

"Well, tell me, how do you fight and destroy darkness?" He asked.

"By bringing light into it."

"You fight evil in the same way."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"By bringing goodness into it."

"But it is easy to shine light into the darkness. Darkness does not resist light. But how can you bring good onto evil when you know it does not accept it?"

"Let's not jump the gun," He replied. "Let me give you another example."

"OK."

"Imagine you have two candles. One is lit and the other is not."

"OK..."

"Now, what happens if you take the lit candle to the extinguished one?"

"It lights it up," I replied.

"Good. And what happens if you take the extinguished one to the lighted candle?" He continued his questioning.

"It lights up again."

"So in this case, no matter which candle is brought to which, the end result is the same. Two burning candles."

"But it is not quite the same," I protested.

"Be patient and see where I am leading up to."

"OK," I agreed.

"In this example we end up with the same result regardless of which one approaches the other, because the force of fire or light is an inherent force. An inner force that is radiant and life giving, in this case to the flame. Whereas darkness has no force of its own."

I was simply following his argument without responding.

He continued, "In the battle of good and evil, you must recognize good as the life giving inner force, the inherent energy of creating. And evil is simply the absence of this force, just like darkness is the absence of light."

"I understand," I nodded.

"But you must also realize that because we are given the freedom of choice, we are free to either choose this inherent force, which we call good, or choose to block the flow of this energy, which we call evil."

"So what you are saying is that evil of itself has no power to resist good," I repeated him.

"Exactly."

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"Then why is there so much evil and destruction on this planet?"

"That is because we block the flow of energy by our misguided choices, and redirect them to destructive ends."

"How?" I asked.

"Imagine you have a flowing river, and you build a dam in front of it to stop its flow. As a result you end up accumulating a lot of water behind the dam, and if you continue to block the flow, then eventually there will be too much pressure for the dam to withstand. And then you have a massive and destructive flood."

"That is pretty dramatic..."

"All right, imagine you have a pipe carrying gas. If you block this pipe, then you will have a build-up of gas, and it will continue until either you release the pressure by allowing the gas to flow or by blowing up the pipe."

"I see." I continued his examples, "Actually, my father passed away from a heart condition. I suppose it is the same with heart attacks. You reduce the flow of blood until you finally block it and then you have a heart attack."

"Yes. That is one example of being destructive. But do understand that death does not destroy the person, it will only move that person out of the four dimensional world. And the whole process is far more involved than the mechanical description you just gave."

I suppose there are some things that need time to be understood. So I changed the subject back to where we were and asked, "You said by our misguided choices we block the flow of energy. So do you mean to say that 'we' are evil?"

"No. We are not evil. Because our essence is the same as Ahura's. We are infinitely good, at least potentially."

"Then you have to clarify it for me," I asked.

"We are not evil. The 'choices we make', when they are not aligned with the Law and Truth, are evil. And because we give our choices power, we can either give them the power to create or destroy."

I was pensive.

He continued, "You must also realise that energy or power is not evil either. Only our choices can be good or evil. So the thought or information that is not in line with the Law, becomes evil. And since through the energy our thoughts become words or deeds, then our communications or actions can become evil."

"As in verse 48:4?" I handed him the open book.

"Yes, *'By making our thoughts better or worse, O Mazda, our words, deeds and conscience shall surely follow.'*"

"So what you are saying is that evil is in the mind."

"Precisely."

"Isn't that the same as what all these motivational speakers and preachers of the power of positive thinking are trying to say?"

"Remember, a timeless truth is truth in any era and by any name," He responded.

"Yes. I remember." I continued, "So let me see if I understand. What you are saying is that evil does not have any power of its own. The only reason it manifests in the four dimensions is because we give it power."

He simply nodded.

I continued, "And the only way we can give something power is if we think of it in the first place. In other words, evil is in our minds only."

"Yes!" He said emphatically.

"And if we simply correct our thoughts and keep them in line with the Law and Truth, then we can only create good."

"You got it!"

"But wait a minute!" I questioned. "We can only correct our own minds and not somebody else's. So your example of the two candles does not apply."

"Let me go back to the lit candle," He started very calmly.

"OK...."

"If the flame is weak and flickering, then the slightest breeze can extinguish it."

"Naturally!"

"But if it is a strong flame, then it can withstand breezes. In fact you will need a very strong wind to blow it out," He said.

"Granted...."

"Now let's say that it has an inner flame that no matter what, it will keep the light going."

"You mean like those party candles that are self-lighting? No matter how many times you blow them out, they light up again."

"Excellent example!" He replied. "So tell me what happens now?"

"I suppose no matter how bad the wind is, it will light up again."

"What's more," He continued the chain of thought, "when you bring the second candle to it, even if the second candle refuses to light up, it will not put out the first one."

"OK," I said. "So we conclude that if you are really good, no evil can drive you astray. But you still have not won over evil."

"That is because you keep thinking of the fight as a physical fight. It is not a physical fight. It is a spiritual fight. And that is why you use spiritual weapons. Remember verse 31:18?"

"You will have to explain more," I asked.

"OK. Remember yesterday I asked you how you would respond in any situation and you said you would evaluate, make a decision, choose and respond?"

"God! You remember everything, don't you?" I replied. "I know you are perfect Yes. I remember."

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"And remember when I asked you what if you were wrong, what was the last sentence you said?"

"Tell me!"

"You said 'I may be ignorant, but I am not stupid.'"

"So?" I asked.

"Very simply that the person who makes the evil choice is just ignorant and not stupid. If only they could realise where they are limiting themselves, they could shift their paradigm and step out of their ignorance. That is how you fight evil. By spreading wisdom. Then people will naturally make the good choice. Because they are not stupid."

He paused, picked up the book and said, "*Verse 44:14: 'O Mazda, tell me. How should I help the liars to become truthful, so that by learning thy message, their soul may be saved.'* A leading question."

"I see." After a thoughtful pause I summarized, "So what you are saying is we should first strengthen ourselves in Truth, and use our good minds, so no amount of evil can mislead or distract us. Then we should try to enlighten the misguided."

"Yes. And then, one by one, we will convert the whole world to the way of good and perfection. You play dominos with goodness."

"Isn't that kind of naive?" I accused.

"Not if it works!"

"OK. Let's take an extreme example. Have you heard of Hitler?"

"Yes," He replied calmly.

"You mean to say we could fight Hitler with goodness?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, come on ... get real!" I protested.

"Well, let's look at it. If the people of Germany, one by one, had become wise and turned to the path of Truth, then eventually there would be no soldiers for someone like Hitler to order about. There would be nobody left to do his killings for him."

"Very idealistic!" I responded.

"And there are other ways too, which we may discuss later. But you should also remember that it is through the Good Mind that we can attain Ahura's powers. And with Ahura's powers you can stop someone ten times worse than Hitler."

"Let's continue with the hike," I requested. Then we both started walking.

* * *

The climb was getting tougher and tougher by the minute. We reached a point where I finally asked, "Shall we go back?"

"I think there are easier parts beyond this patch," He replied.

Trusting his omniscience, I accepted. He was right. Within a few yards the path became considerably more comfortable.

The sun was shining, I was thinking and catching my breath, and Zarathushtra was leaving me to my thoughts.

We stopped and rested briefly, had some water and continued with our hike.

It was not very long before the path became impassable again. So again I asked, "Shall we return?"

Again he responded, "It is not far to go to the peak. And it will get easier soon."

Again he was right. Very soon we could see the peak again. It must have been another half hour away. He suggested we sit down and rest a little more, and have some more water.

* * *

While I was taking in a deep breath of fresh mountain air, he asked, "Do you have any other questions?"

"Yes," I replied.

He was simply looking at me.

I collected my thoughts and said, "You have repeated yourself a number of times throughout the `Gathas'. You kept on repeating the same concept every few chapters. You kept on repeating the rewards of good and consequences of evil. And kept on having doubts. Every so often you asked Ahura Mazda to give you a clear sign or understanding or something. And you kept on asking questions. Why this style?"

"This was about three or four questions loaded into one."

"I am sure you can handle it."

"Well, let's give it a try. First let me tell you why I kept on asking questions. As you can see, most of my questions were leading questions. They contained the answer within the question."

"Yes, and some of them had absolutely no subtlety. Like verse 44:8: *'By performing what kinds of good shall my soul become joyous and serene?'* or in the next verse you ask, *'How should I dedicate my whole being to thee by performing in thy service with full power?'* And to top them all up, in verse 44:12 you ask, *'Which side should I choose? The Truthful or the false ones who through their evil actions reject the precious rewards?'* I mean really.... are you trying to measure how stupid people are?"

"Well, you will be surprised how many people reject this stuff as superstition or dogma." He continued, "Now back to what I was saying, I asked questions, because when I first started on my path, I had questions myself. But since by the time I was composing these songs I had received my answers, I decided to pose the questions in this leading way."

"That makes sense. I suppose you were trying to reach `people' and since you were a `person' yourself, you kept the style naturally `human'."

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"You can say that. As for the doubts, like any other human being, I also encountered challenges on my path. And every time the path seemed impassable, because I could not see what was beyond the obstacles, I would doubt the whole journey."

"I see," I said with a half smile, "kind of like me during our upward climb?"

"I suppose you could say that. It is only human to doubt."

"Thank you for making it easy for my ego."

"You are welcome!" He replied. "So as I encountered my doubts, I also wrote about them. And now if you have doubts and read about mine, it may give you hope and faith that in spite of the barriers, you are on the right path."

"Actually, I think this part is very beneficial, because so far, I have found my spiritual path very challenging. Now I can say if I have doubts, so did Z. But he overcame them by having faith, and so I must do the same."

"Precisely," He replied.

Then I opened the book to verse 43:10 and handed it to him.

He smiled and said, "*Yes, very good. `O Mazda, lead me towards Truth and purity of mind, which I have always desired. Through Love and Faith I hope to reach perfection. O Mazda, Thou test us so that we may prove our faith. Thy tests shall bring spiritual strength to us, particularly the leaders, who must lead the people with power and devotion to reach the ultimate goal of thy Plan.'*"

"I understand. You had challenges and so you put it down in writing, exactly as it was."

"Yes," He replied. "And now to the next part which was `why repeat it so many times.'"

I nodded.

"For a few reasons. First of all, every time I repeated it, I reinforced the message for others. Secondly, every time I repeated it, I reviewed and reinforced the message for myself."

"You mean kind of like affirmations?" I asked.

"Yes. At least for others yes. For myself it was both affirming and reviewing or modifying the philosophy and improving it."

"I see...."

"Third, every time I repeated it, I said it in a different way, so if the reader was not clear with one presentation, maybe the next one would clarify things."

"I see. Like when you used the ocean and wave analogy, and then I gave the example of the Internet?"

"Exactly," He replied. "Fourth, every time that I went through my doubts and renewed my faith, after I came through the other side, my faith grew stronger."

"What do you mean?"

"You remember the first time you said, `Shall we go back?' today, and I assured you that it would get easier?"

"Yes..."

"Well, how much faith did you have in what I said?"

"I thought you are Zarathushtra, and since you are perfect, you must be right!" I replied.

"What about the second time?"

"I see your point. The second time my faith in what you said was much stronger."

"Exactly!" He said. "Because I had already proven myself once. Now tell me what if we face another difficult patch?"

"I'll probably not even ask anything. I'll just assume if Z is going, then it must be OK."

"And that is exactly my point too. This is the power of truthful repetition."

"And that is the power of faith!" I added half jokingly.

"Exactly!" He repeated very seriously. "And that is the power of faith!"

I swallowed my smile and waited for his next comment.

He said, "And the last reason for repetition was that with every repetition the emphasis on the spiritual or fifth dimension increased. But we will talk about this later. Let's climb to the top."

By then I had learned not to question his cryptic comments. I simply got up and followed him.

* * *

The way to the top was fairly easy, until the very last ten minutes of the climb. In fact this was the most challenging part of the entire hike. But I had learned my lesson. If Z was climbing, then I should follow. And sure enough that was a test of my faith.

Just as I had told Z, I did not even question the possibility of reaching the top. I was in good company. And as I expected, the power of my faith paid off.

All the way to the top, at least for the last two hours of the climb, the view was breathtaking, even though we were limited to the parts that were not blocked by the mountain. More than 180 degrees of panoramic view, and in parts, even more.

But to reach the apex was out of this world. Suddenly the eye could see for 360 degrees. A complete unobstructed view. Turn to whichever direction you please and you will see the view. No more was the view blocked by the mountain or a boulder or trees. And there was a choice. A choice to look east ward, or to the west or any other direction.

We sat down and rested for a while, knowing that the way down would be much easier. We also ate some sandwiches which Zarathushtra had materialized, and drank more water. Then we rested again.

* * *

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I was absorbing the energy of the sun when Zarathushtra suddenly broke the silence and said, "Have you ever thought where your spiritual path is leading you?"

"Yes, but I can't say that I have an answer for it. I suppose I can only have an answer when I arrive."

"You are right. Nonetheless you can have an idea!"

"I guess so...."

"Well?" He prompted me.

"Frankly, I often wonder that once we are illumined, then there is nothing else to do. What do you do when you have Ahura's power?"

"I suppose you can do what I am doing," He surprised me.

"Oh!"

"Look, when you were a baby all you wanted to do was to walk. First you started crawling, then you supported yourself by holding on to chairs and tables, and finally you walked."

"I see what you mean," I responded, "but is it like that?"

"Well, not quite. It is more like climbing the mountain. First you are in awe of the majesty of the mountain. Then you make a choice. You exert effort and energy to climb it. You meet obstacles and barriers, and have doubts. Then you overcome them and you have an easy time for a while. Then you meet more obstacles and more doubts and more challenges, and you overcome them too. You get the picture?"

"Yes," I nodded.

"Then you become so tuned into your path that nothing else matters. You face even bigger challenges. In fact just before you are to reach the apex, you are presented with your most difficult tests. The most insurmountable barriers will appear. Barriers of fatigue, of apathy and indifference. You have questions like 'Why?' 'So what?' and 'What difference does it make anyway?' and so on and so forth."

"And that is when you need blind faith," I completed his sentence. "As if you are on autopilot."

"Wrong!" He obliterated my ego's pleasure. "In fact this is the time that you need your highest awareness and alertness. This is the time of temptation as well as opportunity. Every step that you take along your path at this stage will either lead to your glory or to your demise."

"I suppose kind of like 'Genius and Madness border each other'?" I interrupted.

Ignoring my interruption he continued, "At this time, because you have already achieved a monumental task, you can easily succumb to temptations. Temptations of the ego, you know, power, wealth, fame etc."

"I see. But I thought these things were not bad," I asked.

"Of themselves they are not. How you attain them and how you use them will determine their goodness. But let me go back to the mountain."

I nodded in agreement.

"Along your path, every step may also present incredible opportunities for your ascent. The right foothold, the ideal platform and so on. You must be so alert that you can distinguish between opportunity and temptation."

"I understand."

He continued, "And you must have absolute faith."

"Faith in what?"

"Faith in the existence of a mountain top. Faith in the availability of a path to the top. Faith in your own ability to find the right path and to get to the top. Faith that perhaps there is a greater wisdom and power which wants you to reach the top, and is guiding and protecting you along the way."

"I understand."

"And when you manage to pass this final test, you reach the top. Suddenly instead of simply having a higher point of view of what you were seeing before, no matter how beautiful it was, a whole new perspective opens up to you. Instead of the limited 180 degree panorama, you now see all around you. 360 degrees. What's more, you have the choice to look at what you want. Instead of just beauty, you will see glory. Do you understand?"

"Yes, but I have not experienced it," I replied.

"That's fine. You will," He reassured me. "But for now I want you to understand the difference between the view from 20 feet below the peak, and the view from the mountain top." Then he remained silent, leaving me to my thoughts.

* * *

After a while, remembering his cryptic comment in our last stop, I asked him, "Tell me about the progressive emphasis on the spiritual dimension that you briefly mentioned."

"Oh that. I am glad you asked. You see, there are certain things one should not talk about unless asked."

"I suppose that is why there is the saying 'When the student is ready, the teacher will appear'."

"Very good. I am impressed. Alertness of mind is a sign of spiritual progress."

"Thank you!" I replied.

"Now about the spiritual dimension. First of all you do understand that the spiritual dimension is not limited to one dimension only. The reason I referred to it as the fifth dimension was simply to make our communication easier."

"I understand. After all, by looking at the waves, we cannot even begin to tell how many dimensions the ocean has."

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"Exactly. Now to the spiritual dimension. If you notice, in the `Gathas' I make a number of references to the `Realm of Light' or the `House of Songs' or `Paradise' or similar metaphors."

"Yes I have noticed them," I answered. "Look, here, verse 33:10 says: *`O Ahura Mazda, through pure mind and righteousness raise our souls to the Realm of Light and eternal joy.'* In 45:6 you said, *`May we reach Mazda through pure mind, love and faith. May his wisdom lead me to the ultimate, the Realm of Light.'* And on the subject of continuity of the soul, in verse 45:10 you said, *`Creator has promised people to achieve perfection and immortality through following the Law, using perfect mind and action. The reward is bodily health and strength, and continuity of the soul.'*"

"Well," He said, "the reward of reaching the mountain top is to have a first hand experience of the spiritual dimension. You no longer need to believe it or imagine it. Since you experience it, you know it."

"You mean," I asked, "when you were on earth, you experienced going to heaven and then you returned?"

"Heaven is not a place to go to. And it was not heaven as you know it that I experienced. I experienced the spiritual dimension."

"I am not with you."

"What I experienced was a dimension which is eternal. It had no time and no location. The nearest words to describe it are that it was the realm of pure infinite consciousness."

"Tell me more..." I urged.

"I referred to it as the `House of Songs' because there was so much joy and beauty. I called it the `Realm of Light' because there was so much love and wisdom."

"Is it like being immersed in the sea of energy of the quantum field?" I asked.

"Quantum physics has shown more than that. It has shown that the observer, by merely thinking about the observation, affects the outcome. That thoughts are what direct the quantum energy to create physical objects. And the `Realm of Light' that I was referring to was being one with the permeating thought or information field of the world of the Quantum."

"Describe it more....."

"It is not something to describe. It is something to experience."

"How do you experience it?" I asked.

"By climbing your mountain. By following the path of your spiritual growth."

"How do you do that?"

"Again it is not something you `do'"

"I know, it is like shifting your paradigm," I interrupted, "like reading and understanding the `Gathas'."

"Yes. But you must understand that if you want to `run' all the way to the top of the mountain, you are going to run out of wind very soon, or you will slip."

"But can't I take a helicopter to the mountain top?" I asked.

"Sure you can, but you will miss all the challenges along the way. You are simply transported from one place to another. You may be able to see the view, but not the glory. Later I will explain this a little more."

"So how do I get on the path?" I asked again.

"You already are. We all are. The issue is not getting on the path. The point is to move in the right direction."

"Aha...." I said anxiously.

"You do that by first becoming aware. You must be aware of the fact that there is a spiritual dimension, even if you don't know what it is. You must become aware that you are on your path. You must become aware that there is a mountain which you can choose to climb."

"OK. So I become aware. Now what?"

"Then you observe."

"Observe what?" I asked.

"Observe everything. Observe yourself. Observe the mountain. Observe the path, the woods, the lake, other travellers, the flowers, the rocks, the sky. You observe everything."

"Aha....."

"Then you perceive. You perceive the details and the big picture. You perceive through your senses. You also perceive through your feelings and emotions."

"OK...."

"And then you experience. You experience the events and situations that you come across. You experience your feelings and sensations. You experience the pain and the pleasure, the sorrow and the joy, the dark and the light. Your thoughts, your emotions, your encounters and interactions."

"How does that help?"

"You can't transcend the four dimensions unless you know what they are. First you should be able to experience the four dimensions as fully as you can. And you do this by becoming aware, observing, perceiving, and experiencing."

"Explain this idea more," I asked.

"You see, we are all here in the four dimensions for a limited time, covering a limited amount of space. We are here, because this world offers us the experiences of this world. So we must try to fully experience 'this' world."

"So what you are saying is that we are all going to experience the fifth dimension when we die."

"Correct," He replied.

"So what is the point of wanting to transcend the four dimensions?"

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"Do you remember our example of the flat surface inside the three dimensional block?" He asked.

"Yes."

"Well, if you are a simple being on that surface, your world and your perspective of the world is very limited. But if you can look at the surface from the three dimensions, then you have an expanded view of your world."

"But doesn't that make you more miserable, knowing that your world is so limited and you can't do anything about it?" I asked.

"First of all you can do a lot about it. Remember you have Ahura's powers. Secondly not at all. In fact it gives you a better idea of why you are in that limited world, and so you can fulfill your purpose better. You do not become attached to the experiences of the four dimensions."

"I see." I paused to think a little and then asked, "So what is our purpose in this four dimensional universe?"

"*To help renew the world and make it progress towards its completion.*' Just like in verse 30:9 that we were talking about a few days ago."

"OK. So we are now experiencing the four dimensions. Then what?" I asked.

"Then you simply shift your paradigm."

"To what?"

"To that presented in the 'Gathas' or something similar to it."

"And I suppose you don't need to do anything else," I remarked.

"That's right. Then you just let things happen as they will, and you will see that you are there. Just like that."

"Oh, I don't know. It sounds like some Eastern mystical philosophy," I protested.

"Well, I was a philosopher and a mystic, and I was from the East."

"You know what I mean," I countered.

"Let me try to explain it this way. Contrary to what you are feeling, my philosophy is very proactive, but it does not tell you what to do and what not to do. Because then it will be prescriptive, and as a result there will be many cases where it will not apply. In addition, if I prescribed solutions, then I would be limiting your freedom of choice, and that would be limiting your essence. I could not do that."

"So how does it become proactive?"

"Very simply by explaining the purpose of the universe and some of its fundamental operating laws, I have shifted paradigms. So now we would operate from a more spiritual paradigm than before. And since our objective is progress of the world, then the right and good thing to do is to be thoughtful, using our pure mind, and to be proactive through our efforts, and to bring quality to our work through love and faith. You don't need anything else. You can connect with the supreme wisdom as well as I can. Remember the Internet?"

"Fine, but how do you experience the spiritual dimension in this way?" I asked again.

"Oh that. That is the byproduct of your four dimensional experiences."

"What do you mean?"

"If you are experiencing the four dimensions as much as you can, then you will also experience beauty and joy and peace and serenity and wisdom and awe. And in certain isolated cases you will experience perfection. And every now and again you will experience perfection and lose sense of time."

"Go on...."

"And when this happens, it is generally because you have used your pure mind to connect with the infinite intelligence, and you have exhibited your gifts through the emanations. I mean you have used your pure mind to make the perfect plan, in line with the Law, which you perform with power and conviction, and in a loving manner and absolute faith in the outcome."

"Well?" I asked.

"Well, this is the perfect experience," He replied.

"And.....?"

"And this is the experience of reaching the mountain top. You transcend the four dimensions. You experience the spiritual dimensions too. You gain a first hand experience of the Realm of Light."

"That's it? That's all you have to do?" I asked.

"Yes. But remember the Ashem Vohu prayer? The last part of it said, '*Happy and blissful is he who is righteous for the sake of being righteous alone.*' Which you rightly interpreted as saying: you do the right thing because it is the right thing to do. You do not need a reward or anything in return. The reward of bliss is a byproduct."

"Yes..."

"Well, it is exactly the same with transcending the physical realm. You don't do the right thing to transcend the four dimensions. You do them because they are the right things to do. The experience of the spiritual dimensions is a byproduct."

"I see."

"One more thing," He commented. "Doing the right thing is a lot more difficult than you think, because we have been trained since childhood to think and live in a different paradigm. It will take a lot of courage and persistence. But really, it is that simple."

* * *

"You still don't believe me, do you?" He asked after a long pause.

"I don't know what to think."

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"Well, remember verse 43:7? It says, *'The good mind approached me and asked who are you? To whom do you belong? To which path do you turn when you are doubtful?'* Remembering these questions may help you."

"I am not sure what you are getting at," I replied.

"Very simply it says, when you are in doubt, where do you turn? And the way to know your Creator is to know yourself. So know yourself first."

I did not respond.

He continued, "And the best way to know yourself is to experience your world. Through your senses and feelings you will get to know yourself, and eventually your Creator. It is like telling the wave to know itself and it will know the ocean. Try it for a while."

"OK!" and then I dropped this subject.

* * *

After another long pause I asked him, "You mentioned heaven and hell in the *'Gathas'*. I used to think that you were pragmatic and suggested that we could create heaven here on earth."

"We could. But it does not mean that we can't have a heaven in the spiritual dimension."

"I suppose we could. But do we?" I asked.

"First let me ask you, should it matter? Should it affect what we do here on earth? Shouldn't you do the right thing because you want to create heaven here on earth? And not because you might go to some place nice when you die?"

"I agree. Now that we have established it does not matter, is there heaven and hell?" I asked again.

He smiled at my persistence and said, "You recall the verse about the continuity of the soul and other ones about the Realm of Light?"

"Yes."

"Heaven does exist but not as you know it. Again it is not some place. It is an aspect of the spiritual dimensions. It is oneness with Ahura."

"What about hell?" I asked.

"Perhaps the best verses that describe the concept of hell are 51:9 which says, *'Complete frustration is the consequence of an untruthful life, while the truthful shall receive thy blessings.'* You see, frustration is hell. Frustration from not being able to become one with Ahura."

"But if we are the ocean, why should we not reach Ahura?" I asked.

"OK. Let's now go to verse 49:11 to explain this. *'The souls of the wicked shall return to hell, or the house of untruth, because their inner light has grown dim and has moved away from the light of Truth.'* It is like saying because their light has gone out, they will go to the dark room. If you want to continue the ocean analogy, you could say that they

have evaporated or gone into the sand, and are no longer one with the ocean. That is hell."

"It is all very abstract."

"Certainly, because we are trying to explain something from the fifth dimension, in terms of our four dimensional experiences and limitations."

"Tell me about the Divine Fire, or the Judgement Bridge or the day of resurrection," I asked.

"They are all metaphorical. let's take verse 51:9 where it says, '*The followers of Truth and False shall be put to test by thy Divine Fire, and this test shall lay bare the fate of each group.*' How do you like this?"

"Pretty scary."

"It is a metaphor. An alchemical metaphor. It says that through a test much like the heating of base metals to separate their impurities, after your physical death and transition to the spiritual realm, your life will be tested and all of its impurities will be exposed, and you shall face the appropriate consequences."

"Is this meant to worry us?" I asked.

"The verses that deal with afterlife, mainly have esoteric significance. But one thing which is fairly easy to explain is this. Do you remember when we were discussing interdependence between the physical and the spiritual planes?"

"Yes," I replied.

"One way to look at it is this. Just because life on the physical plane is over, it does not mean that your soul vanishes. So if you have any positive or negative stuff left over for which you have not faced the consequences, then no problem, you will simply carry it over to the other plane."

"Kind of like Karma?"

"Not quite. You don't have to come back here to deal with it. You can deal with it in the spiritual dimensions. And you must understand that heaven and hell were simply representations of the carrying of the law of cause and effect to the other side."

"I am still puzzled," I said. "If the spiritual dimension is timeless, then how can you deal with the consequences of your choices that you carried over from here, and eventually clear them. I mean if it is timeless, then 'eventually' has no meaning."

"Very good. Now you are intellectually understanding timelessness. But do bear in mind that the spiritual realm is more than one dimension. And just like time creates a means of experiencing here, there are other dimensions that create means of dealing with one's consequences there too. But you must not think of it like time."

"It is very abstract, but it feels a lot better. To think that there is no way out after you die, is quite unfair," I remarked.

"We should make our way back." He simply got up and started descending. I took one last look at the 360 degree view, took a deep breath, and started following him.

* * *

On the shallow slopes I asked him, "You did not tell me. What do you do after you have been to the mountain top?"

"You simply go down, share your experiences with others and encourage them to climb and have the experience for themselves."

"I see. Like the hero's journey."

"Yes and no. Yes you return just like the hero does. Humbly and wisely and lovingly. But no, you don't assume that you are better than the others. But that will be obvious when you get to the mountain top."

I nodded to signify that I understood.

"And you can always return to the mountain top any time you want, even by helicopter, because now you have had the knowledge and the experience of the mountain and the journey."

"And that's it?" I asked.

"That's it!" was his only response.

* * *

We were half way down the mountain when he stopped, suggesting that it was a good place to rest. Seizing the opportunity, I said, "I have a few other questions which are less abstract. Do you mind if I ask them?"

"Not at all. Go ahead..."

"The first question is that you spent quite a few chapters and verses just dealing with how the good choose to be good and how the wicked are wicked. You talk about their thoughts, words and deeds, what they choose and the consequences. Why so much emphasis is put on that?"

"For a few reasons. First of all the core of my philosophy is based on the principle of cause and effect. It was very important to emphasise that. And so I presented the same concept in as many ways as I could."

"OK..."

"Second," He continued, "it was important for people to understand that the decision comes in the moment of choice. That what causes our actions or communication to be good or bad is the thoughts we have and the choices we make. We have freedom to choose, but we are also responsible for that choice. So I emphasised in as many ways as I could, how important it is to make the right choice."

"I follow..."

"Remember I mentioned the beginning of verse 48:4? It goes like this: *'By making our thoughts better or worse, O Mazda, our words, deeds and conscience shall surely follow.*

The path we choose by our voluntary choice will also determine our Will and Faith. And according to thy wise law, this is what distinguishes our destiny from other people's."

"OK. So you have made it clear that our choices based on our thoughts determine our destiny. If we choose good, we will end up with the rewards. If we choose bad, we will suffer the consequences."

"Third," He continued, "I used repetition again to affirm this for people, and to make sure that sooner or later they would get the point."

I nodded.

"And finally, when you are divinely inspired, you don't have much option. There is only one right thing and you know it, so you do it."

I knew that whenever he started to talk cryptically, it was my cue to drop the subject. So I went to my next question and asked, "All right. You also refer a lot to the concept of Love. Tell me what does it mean to you?"

"You had mentioned already that Love was the fourth emanation. But Love includes a number of characteristics. Love is good, and like anything that is good, you do it because it is good. So you Love, because it is the right thing to do."

"Even if you find it difficult to?" I asked.

"Nobody said that climbing the mountain or following your path would be easy. It was just promised that anybody can do it. Each one of us can climb our own mountain. We have the ability, but it is not necessarily easy."

I nodded and asked, "Tell me more about Love..."

"Love requires dedication and devotion and faith."

"I can understand the devotion and dedication, but faith in what?"

"Faith in the beloved. Faith that your Love energy is not being wasted. That you are loving what is worthy of being loved."

"But I thought everything and everyone is worthy of being loved."

"Yes and no," He replied yet again. "Yes everything and everyone is worthy of being loved because in essence they are one and the same thing. They are you and me. They are Ahura."

"So what is not worthy of being Loved?"

"Evil. Incorrect choices. The wicked, as long as they are on the path of making the wrong choices. For as long as they are not seekers of Truth. It is not the person you do not love. It is the choice, the thought you do not love."

"Its sounds like you are trying to justify some mistake," I remarked.

"Not at all. First let me tell you that to submit to evil is to give it power. Love is not in submission, but in righteous use of power."

"OK....."

"Now getting back to the main issue, anything that has the life force within it is worthy of being loved. Anything that is a lack of that life energy is not."

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"I see. You mean Light is worthy, darkness is not."

"Exactly. But then if you really want to pick points with this presentation, you can say that strictly speaking, if it is a lack of something, it does not exist. So if it does not exist, how can you love it? Therefore everything that exists is worthy of being loved."

"That's an interesting way of looking at it. Thanks for asking my questions for me," I had the audacity to reply.

"This is where it gets abstract again. Remember when we were talking about good and bad, and we realized that it is not people who are bad, but their choices that may be?"

"Yes..."

"What I briefly touched upon was that choices were nothing but thought, or information."

"OK?" I asked looking puzzled.

"And as a result, information or thought could be good or bad."

"I see..." I said, not sounding very convinced.

"Now I want to bring a few points together, so follow me very carefully."

"I'll try."

"I had originally said that Mazda means Supreme Wisdom, which refers to thought. The infinite mind, the cosmic thinker, the creator of all life giving information."

"I understand..."

"And I said that as human beings we are endowed with the Good Mind, our own chunk of infinite intelligence, our computer on the Internet if you will, our thinker, our chooser of what information to create and what to follow."

"OK?"

"So what we have in common with Mazda is our ability to create and choose information."

"Yes?" I said, still waiting to see where his thoughts were leading to.

"And I said that Mazda created the Perfect Plan and the Law and this is how the universe was created. And in everything that we say or do, we first create a plan and then try to follow the Law, and in this way we create our reality."

"OK?" I said, still not clear of where this was leading to.

"The only difference is that Mazda had chosen to create life giving and good information, and thus created a good and perfect living universe. Whereas we sometimes choose to create destructively, because we do not use our Good Mind."

"Aha!..."

"And so it can be concluded that the stuff that makes the universe the way it is, is 'information', both good and life giving, or as we may choose, bad and destructive."

"I still don't understand what you are getting at," I urged him to clarify.

"What I am getting at is that the stuff that makes our reality is information. Just like the quantum physicists tell us. An underlying field of thought or information that permeates all reality."

He continued, "And by simply choosing the information that we wish to select, believe and act upon, we can determine or change our reality. That our thoughts have power."

"I understand. Our thoughts have power. But what has that got to do with Love?"

"Love as the fourth emanation does not just apply to our actions as you were describing. It also applies to our thoughts. Think Love, and you will create a loving world. Eliminate Love from your thoughts, and you will live in a universe devoid of love."

"So you are saying that Love is thought?" I asked.

"Yes and no."

"Not again?" I expressed my frustration.

"Let's go back to interdependence."

"OK."

"Interdependence applies to everything in this universe, including the six emanations. So Love and the Plan are interdependent. But so are Love and the Law, and Love and Action, and Love and Perfection, and Love and Immortality. But then again so are the Plan and the Law, and the Plan and Action etc. etc. In fact all of them are interdependent with each other."

"OK."

"So yes, Love is a thought, but it is more than that too. Love is an action. Love is beauty. Love is a state of perfection and timelessness. Love is the Law."

"I think I understand."

"And there is one more step. All of the emanations are also interdependent with the Good and Perfect Mind, the Creator, Ahura."

"You mean like the saying: 'Love is God'." I asked.

"Yes, but there is more. Love is God. But Love is more than that. And God is Love, but God is more than that too. God is also wisdom, and action, and discipline, and desire, and detachment, and beauty, and perfection, and the Law, and humor, and light, and immortality, and so on and so forth. In fact God is all that is life giving and constructive. God is everything that 'is'. God is the ocean and the Internet."

"We are back to the mystical saying 'all is one' again, aren't we?" I asked.

"Sure. Remember, a timeless truth is truth at any time and by any name."

* * *

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I paused for a while to think, had a drink of water and then asked: "Something completely different now. What do you think of the institution of marriage? I mean you do mention it in chapter 53. Tell me what you think of it."

"Let's go to a couple of verses to clear things up. In verse 53:3 I say to my daughter Pouruchista: *'Pouruchista, the youngest daughter of Zarathushtra, Mazda has ordained Jamaspa for you to be your husband, since he is constant in his Good Mind as a devotee of Truth and Righteousness. Confer with your own understanding and Good Mind, and act as directed by your own love and wisdom.'* What I am telling my daughter is that it seems that destiny has brought her and Jamaspa together to be married. Nevertheless, she should go into her own heart and mind and choose for herself what to do."

"So you are saying that there is an element of destiny involved," I asked.

"Yes. But like everything else, she can choose to go with it or reject it. Either way is fine, as long as she acts wisely according to her heart and mind."

"What else do you say?"

"The second significant verse is verse 53:5 where I give advise to all young men and women who are considering forming a family. I say to them: *'Understand this doctrine with your mind and soul. Try to surpass each other in truth and righteousness and goodness. And you shall be rewarded with a life of Good Mind, filled with joy and happiness.'* Here I am saying that your philosophy of life need not change just because you are married. You should still follow your pure mind. You should even compete with each other to be good and loving, because now you have a partner, a training partner, to train on the path of Good."

"Anything else about marriage?" I asked.

"That is pretty much it. I also give the consequences of what happens if you deviate from the path of Good, but I think that is very obvious."

"So tell me, do you condone marriage?"

"When I talked about marriage, I referred to the formation of a family unit. During those times, the only reasonable way you could do that was through the institution of marriage. You are not going to push me into giving a prescriptive guideline. You can use your own good mind to see if the institution is necessary for the formation of your family unit or not. The timeless advice is to base it on love and wisdom. But even then, you have to make your own choice."

It was time to descend again. So I had a little more water and we set off again.

* * *

The sun was about to set when we arrived at the lake. We both sat on a log to rest a little. I was hot and sweaty, but it was a wonderfully refreshing hike.

I finally asked him: "What do you say about politics?"

"Not much, except that we should choose our leaders very carefully. We should make sure that they follow their Pure Mind, and base their actions on the law of Progress."

"That's it?"

"Yes. Let me give you a couple of verses. First let me illustrate the consequences of our choice of leaders. In verse 44:20 I said: *'O Mazda I ask thee, how is it possible for the wicked to become rulers? The persons who fight for their own selfish ends and for their own personal desires. They have created anger and hatred on earth. Would they ever try to create harmony and security in the world based on the Law, and would they ever bring peace and Love?'* So this verse implies that we should beware of the intentions of our rulers and never allow them to take power for selfish or wrong intentions, because they will be destructive. We should look for wisdom and love in our leaders."

"What else do you say?" I encouraged him, even though he was ready to continue.

"In verse 31:9 I said: *'Mazda has granted each one of us the power to choose the good path or that of evil, the one that is chosen by the true leader or the untruthful one.'* And in 31:10 I made it very obvious: *'Between the two paths, we should choose our supporters and leader from those who choose the promotion of truth. May the false leader never influence the minds of people, even when showing to be outwardly pious.'*"

"But you don't mention what you think of politics," I insisted.

"Again you are asking me for a prescriptive solution. I am sorry. You have to ask your own Good Mind, make your own choice and decisions, and take responsibility for their consequences. Individually and collectively."

"I suppose there is no point in me asking you about anything else, like the economy, or our educational system, or sciences, or the Church either."

"That is right. I have given you all the answers that I have. From here on, you as an individual should prescribe your own solutions. You should take responsibility for getting in touch with your own Good Mind. Use your best wisdom and love. Make decisions. Make choices. And accept the consequences. That is the experience of the four dimensions."

"OK. I guess I should go home now and rest. See you tomorrow," I replied and started walking off.

"Aren't you interested in seeing how I disappear?" He stopped me.

"Should I be?"

"You should never become apathetic. Anything that is awesome should always bring awe to you. That is a conscious choice that you must make. I will see you here tomorrow. I think we will be concluding our discussions then." He finished his sentence and simply dematerialized into thin air, just like he had appeared that morning.

* * *

That night I was trying to review what we had discussed all day, but could not concentrate. Even though our discussions were very detailed, involved and important, I could not take my mind off his last comment. Why should I always be in awe of the awesome? And 'choose' to do that? What did he mean?

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I could not think of anything else, and could not go to sleep either. Finally it must have been just past midnight when I went to sleep.

The next thing I recall was that I woke up from a dream with my heart pounding. It was very strange. I dreamed that I was by a pool, chasing somebody. Then that person just started running across the pool, and I followed him. I simply stepped on the water, and continued running.

I was half way across when I noticed that I was running on water. I suddenly became aware of it. Before I could do anything, I realized that I wanted to catch the person I was chasing. So I just shrugged off the walking on water phenomenon and continued my chase. I was still running on the solid water when I woke up.

It was just after four. I could not go back to sleep. So very early in the morning, I took a shower and went off to the lake.

* * *

I arrived at the lake just after dawn. I was looking around for Zarathushtra when I heard a voice calling me from above. I looked up and I saw him parachuting down. He landed about twenty feet away from me.

As he was collecting his parachute he said, "Good morning."

"Good morning," I responded to his familiar voice, and was suddenly shocked to see the physical changes in him. He must have been over sixty years old. He had red hair and a long red beard. But he was still wearing his white T-shirt and his faded blue jeans.

He must have seen me startled by his physical appearance because he said, "I dressed for the occasion."

"What occasion?" I asked.

"You will see later."

I didn't waste any time. I asked him, "What did you mean by your last comment yesterday?"

"You mean about being in awe of the awesome?"

"Yes."

By now he had collected his parachute and was stuffing it in his back pack. "Let me see," He said. "The first day that I stepped out of the doorway of light, you were quite startled, but yesterday you were not even interested in seeing how I disappeared."

"Well, you are Zarathushtra. Anything is possible for you."

"And so it is for you."

"Why do you say things like that?"

"Just because something becomes expected or usual, you should not underestimate the level of intelligence that goes into its creation."

"I am not with you."

He clarified, "You see, the whole world around you is quite awesome and magical. Think of the amount of intelligence that has gone into creating your anatomy, or this tree, or this mountain. Each one of these ordinary occurrences are really quite extraordinary."

"Yes...."

"You should not become so unaware that you lose your perspective of reality. Not the reality that people refer to, but the real reality. The reality of intelligence, thought and information creating everything that you see and experience in the four dimensions."

"And if I do?..."

"Well, then you simply 'exist' in the four dimensions. You stop living here. You stop experiencing the true magic of the four dimensions. And if you cannot experience the four dimensions, you cannot transcend it."

"OK. I accept your point. You are right. We become accustomed to things very quickly, and we take them for granted very easily."

"Good. I am glad that you understand."

"Tell me something else," I asked. "What did you mean when you said that anything is possible for me too?"

"I meant exactly that."

"You are going to have to explain," I urged.

"Over the past few days, I have been telling you that you have the same essence as Ahura, and so do I. So You and I are made of the same essence. The Unlimited."

"I am listening..."

"So anything that I can do, you also can do, and more..."

"What?"

"If you are truly Ahura, then you have unlimited potential. But it is your choice to manifest your true potentials. You will limit yourself as much as you choose to."

"But you know how to do it and I don't. How do I choose to become unlimited?" I asked.

"They say the answer to any question that you have is within the question, if you ask it properly."

"And...?"

"You just asked 'How do I "choose" to become unlimited?' and there is the answer. 'Choose!'"

"But how do I do that?"

"How do you choose anything?" He asked back.

I paused for a while and then answered, "I choose by choosing I guess. It is a simple decision. You just choose."

"You see, you didn't need me after all."

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"Give me a minute. I did a Firewalk a few months ago. I chose to walk on fire without getting hurt, and I did it. But that was so simple. I just did it."

"And so it is with everything else."

"You mean I can walk on water just like you did the other day?" I could not resist asking.

"Yes. And you can vanish into thin air, or walk through a doorway of light, or even disappear in a bathroom."

"But how?"

"You have already answered it yourself. By choosing to do so." He was showing his frustration.

"OK. Let me tell you about the firewalk. I chose to do that because I saw that it was possible."

"How did you know that it was possible?" He asked back.

"Because others were doing it, and so I tried and saw that I could do it too."

"I see. So others determine what is possible for you and what is not," He replied.

"No. But with a firewalk, we are talking about something dangerous."

"OK. So do you think walking on water would be dangerous? Even in a swimming pool? Just like in your dream?" He obliterated my excuse.

"How do you know about my...." I stopped myself in mid sentence, knowing what the answer would be. Then I asked "What does the `Gathas' say about these possibilities?"

"I have already told you `that you have Ahura's powers'. Now are you going to limit yourself? Besides, what does it matter what the `Gathas' says? Are you going to limit yourself because of something a book which was written a few thousand years ago, says? Will you really allow others, alive or dead, to determine your possibilities?"

I was silently staring at him.

"Whether you want to accept it or not, you have infinite and unlimited potential. You are also responsible for unfolding your potentiality with the choices that you make. If you do, you will reap the benefits. If you don't you will pay the penalty, and your penalty is to be condemned to live in a world of limitation and frustration."

I was still looking at him in complete silence.

"Regardless of what you think, you are making choices every minute of the day. You either choose what you want, or by your refusal to make a decision, you choose the limitation." And he walked off onto the lake.

He was going without even saying goodbye. And he was walking quite fast. Would I ever see him again? Did I have any more questions to ask him? I couldn't let him go just like this.

So I ran after him. He was already at least thirty steps ahead of me, and was walking very fast. I ran to catch up. I had cut the distance by half when suddenly I realized that I was running on the surface of the lake. I was walking on water. Immediately I understood its significance.

But momentarily I shrugged it off, because it was more important for me to reach him. So I chose to continue my run, not thinking about what I was stepping on.

I finally reached him and said, "OK. I understand."

"I can see that," He responded.

"Were you really just going to walk away without saying goodbye?" I asked, standing on top of the water, at least one hundred steps from the shore.

"That would have depended on the choices that you were going to make. I would if you still did not understand."

"Why can I stand on this surface just like this?" I asked.

"Because you choose to."

"Just like that?"

"Yes. Just like that," He replied and then continued, "Look, let's go back to the shore. People will be coming here soon and they may misunderstand what we are doing."

"OK," I replied and we slowly headed back to the shore. We were both silent. I suppose he wanted me to fully experience and understand what I was doing.

The water was very calm. The ripples would brush against my shoes, but other than that, the water surface was completely solid. I did not think of any possibility other than the solidity of the surface. Walking on water for me was as natural as breathing. And all of this simply because I had chosen to.

When we stepped onto the shore, my feet sank into the sand. In fact it was more difficult to walk on the sandy shore than on water. And all of this because I chose to, and that I had enough faith and belief that it was possible. I had just expanded my possibilities.

I finally broke the silence and said, "I vow to think in terms of my possibilities instead of my limitations from now on."

"Good. Because that is how Mazda planned the universe to reach its completion. Through possibilities."

We sat in silence on the sandy shore. A couple of hikers came and walked past us. And we simply remained there while exchanging greetings. And we turned silent again.

* * *

The sun was high in the sky when I asked him, "How would you summarize the main points of your philosophy?"

He responded, "Actually it is quite simple. You can probably put the whole thing down in less than a page if you know what you are talking about."

"Let's give it a try," I said, "I'll just keep quiet until you finish."

"OK. Let's start from the beginning. Ahura Mazda or the Lord Creator, the Supremely Wise through its six interdependent emanations created the universe. Using the Good

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Mind, the Plan was conceived, based on the Law. It was brought into being through Action, and Love. And it was Perfect and Immortal.

"Part of the Plan for the universe was to take it from its initial state to its completion, and in this process, it would use the creations within the universe itself.

"We the creations, were made of the same essence as Ahura, and were given the Good Mind to realise the Plan and the Law, and to help renew the world along the line of its progress towards completion.

"Because we are of the same essence as Ahura, we have the potential to have Ahura's powers. We attain these powers through our choices. If we choose to be aligned with the Law and the Plan, in other words if we are Truthful and Righteous, and if we help through our Action and Love to renew the world, then we will tap into our true and unlimited essence.

"Because we are of the same essence as Ahura, we are also given the freedom of choice. We are free to choose to direct our energies in any way that we desire. And for this reason, we can either choose to direct our energies in good, life giving and constructive ways, or choose to be destructive, life denying and bad by blocking the flow of progressive energy.

"Because we have the freedom to choose, we are also responsible for our choices. We must face the consequences of our choices. Individually. If we choose the Good path, we will benefit from the rewards of our choice. And if we choose the bad, then we must also suffer the consequences of our choice.

"However, we must choose the right thing because it is in line with the Plan and the Law, and it will make the world progress towards its completion, not because we will benefit from the rewards of our choice. Nevertheless, we will benefit from the rewards, as a byproduct of our right choices and actions.

"We must strive to create heaven here on earth, and by doing so, our souls will be rewarded by becoming one with Ahura when we leave the physical dimensions.

"And everything else will be prescriptive decisions which will come from our individual thoughts and choices in any particular situation," He finished.

"Wow! That seems to be pretty straight forward," I responded.

"It is. Now the only thing left to do is to shift our paradigms and choose accordingly." After a brief pause He added, "Let's walk around the lake shore."

"OK," I agreed and we started walking.

* * *

We were walking in silence for a while until I asked, "Do you have any message for the Zoroastrians of today?"

"Yes. My message is don't get stuck with splitting hairs. Stop arguing and fighting among yourselves. Stop name calling; somebody is a hardliner or a liberal. This group is orthodox and the other is follower of the 'Gathas' only. Rituals are good, or they are

obsolete. This sort of argument only serves in diverting your energy and attention to the wrong things. The main point is that you are all the creations of Ahura, and are endowed with Ahura's powers. Make the right choices by thinking from your mind and heart, by being wise and loving, in every situation. Keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to create heaven here on earth. Go and realise your possibilities."

"I hope they will listen to you," I replied.

"I hope they will listen to their own Good Mind," He answered back.

"Do you have any message for the people of the world today?" I asked after a pause.

"Yes. Don't get so stuck on methodology that you will lose sight of the purpose. But also keep in mind that just as much as the end does not justify the means, the means do not justify the end either.

"Stop arguing and fighting among yourselves. Stop calling each other hardliner or radical. This group is orthodox and the other is liberal. That religion is better than this one. Or science is better than religion. Or this nation is superior to that one. This sort of argument only serves in diverting your energy and attention to the wrong things. The main point is that you are all the creations of Ahura, and are endowed with Ahura's powers. Make the right choices by thinking from your mind and heart, by being wise and loving, in every situation. Keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to create heaven here on earth. Go and realise your possibilities.

"You are all powerful as individuals. No matter where or under what conditions you live, you still have the choice to think whatever you want, and you have the choice to react to any situation as you determine to be the best. Remember that your thoughts create. Use your best wisdom and love. Listen to your Good Mind. Make the right choice.

"The world can only change one person at a time. And you are personally responsible. Every single one of you. So take responsibility."

* * *

We were Walking in silence for a little while longer. The beach was deserted. Not a soul in sight, other than Zarathushtra and I.

Then he turned to me and said, "I have done my work here. I have told you everything that I wanted to share with you. Now it is up to you to choose what you are going to do with it."

"Any suggestions?" I asked.

"Yes. Climb your own mountain. Follow your spiritual path. And when you have been to the mountain top, come down and go back to the people. Very humbly and wisely and lovingly share your experiences with them. And encourage them to find their own path and climb their own mountain, and experience the mountain top for themselves."

"I understand." I paused for a while and then asked, "Now that you are leaving, am I ever going to see you again?"

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"You don't need to my friend, because you `are' me. Any time that you have doubts or need guidance, remember that our purpose on earth is to work along the path of progress."

I nodded.

"And know that you can get in touch with me, or Mazda, by simply connecting with your Good Mind. Remember my friend, you are the ocean. You are Ahura."

I nodded with a smile.

He simply unpacked his parachute, opened it up, and after waving a final farewell to me he looked up. Then his parachute canopy opened, and as if being lifted by a wind from below, he took off into the air. Ascending further and further up, until my eyes could no longer see him.

* * *

For exactly two weeks, I kept thinking about our discussions in the woods and by the lake, our meeting in the coffee shop, our stroll in the park, our hike to the mountain top, our walk on the lake. But mainly I thought about his message.

I was blessed with meeting him. It was a true gift that I should use and share with others. I should tell them that I met *Zarathushtra*. The real *Zarathushtra*. I should give them his message and tell them thus spake *Zarathushtra*. Thus spake *the Real Zarathushtra*.

So having made my choice, on the fifteenth day, I picked up a pen and some paper and started writing. I wrote:

"Mid morning in the supernatural forests near Vancouver in blessed Beautiful British Columbia, immersed in my thoughts....."

* * *

