



## Examining the Relationship between Wisdom and Politics in the Gathas; The Idea of the “Political-Civic Human” in the Sacred Text

**Basir Kushki:** PhD Student, Department of Political Science, Khorramabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khorramabad, Iran (Corresponding Author).

kooshkidasir@gmail.com

**Ali Fallahi Seifoddin:** Professor, Department of Political Science, Khorramabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khorramabad, Iran.

ali.fallahi@iau.ac.ir

**Ali Fallahnejad:** Professor, Department of Political Science, Khorramabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khorramabad, Iran.

alifalahnejad@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** Examining the relationship between reason and its relationship with politics in ancient Iranian political thought opens a window to understanding the nature of politics in its Iranian sense. For this purpose, one must inevitably turn to authentic Iranian texts. The Gathas are the oldest and most authentic ritual text of the Iranians. Wisdom, in authentic Iranian texts, is expressed by the term 'Kherad' (Wisdom/Intellect). Examining the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas raises a fundamental question: Is politics in the Gathas founded upon wisdom? If so, what kind of politics emerges from the heart of Zoroastrian wisdom? In the Gathas, wisdom is not merely an individual virtue but a cosmic and guiding force. The ideal and wise sovereign (Shahryar) is one who chooses consciously and accepts responsibility for his actions. Employing an interpretive approach, specifically Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle, this research seeks to achieve a text-based understanding of the relationship between these two concepts in the Gathas.

**Keywords:** Wisdom (Kherad), Politics (Siyasat), Gathas, Ahura Mazda, Spenta Mainyu, Vohu Manah, Asha, Khshathra, Spenta Armaiti, Haurvatat, Ameretat.

## **Introduction**

Political thought in ancient Iran, particularly within the religious and philosophical texts of Zoroastrianism, holds a distinguished place. These texts not only encompass ritual and ethical aspects but also articulate profound reflections on social order, justice, and the role of humanity in organizing and administering the world. Among these, the Gathas, the oldest and most authentic part of the Avesta attributed to Zarathustra himself, are recognized as a fundamental source for understanding the intellectual and political foundations of Zoroastrianism. With their poetic language and philosophical concepts, these hymns depict an ideal world in which wisdom, good thought, righteousness (truth), patience and forbearance, perfection and wholesomeness, and immortality constitute the principal pillars of political thought, statesmanship, and ideal governance. Iranian political thought in the Gathas extends beyond what is commonly known as politics today; it represents a broad and profound worldview based on ontology, anthropology, and myths that provided legitimacy for their rule. Examining the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas delineates a model of the relationship between politics and wisdom in ancient political thought, a topic that has not yet received serious attention from scholars and researchers. Knowledge of the ideal model of political thought and the examination of the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas can illuminate research on this subject across historical periods. The significance of this research lies in answering the following question: What relationship existed between wisdom and politics in the Gathas as the oldest and most authentic part of the Avesta? This article, aiming to investigate the link between wisdom and politics in the Gathas, analyzes the key concepts of this ritual text and seeks to demonstrate how Zoroastrian thought in the Gathas redefines politics from an ethical and philosophical perspective. Furthermore, by analyzing the role of humanity, the ruler, and society in the Gathas, it endeavors to present a model of statesmanship based on wisdom and truth—a model that can inspire addressing contemporary challenges. Understanding political thought and the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas can acquaint us with the foundational

principles of ancient Iranian political thought and assist in charting a vision for the future. In the Gathas, wisdom, as a fundamental and guiding force, plays a pivotal role in shaping ethics-oriented politics. The geometry of the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas, as the foundations of political thought, is manifested in the fabric of political sovereignty across historical periods. Therefore, writing this article can serve as a basis for research entitled "Examining the Relationship between Wisdom and Politics in the Historical Periods of Ancient Iran." Since there is no mention of a specific nation, tribe, or land in the Gathas, and this religious text of Zoroastrianism is a universal call to humanity and societies to follow the path of truth, the term "Urban-Human" (*ensān-e shahri*) thought is a fitting and appropriate designation for the Gathas. This article, relying on the "hermeneutic circle" based on Schleiermacher's hermeneutic approach, has conducted a deep semantic analysis of the Gathas text. As he believed: "Hermeneutics is the art of understanding the speech of another correctly." (Schleiermacher, 2023/1402: 9). The hermeneutic circle is one of the most important pillars of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. He proposed the first category to describe the understanding of texts. In Schleiermacher's intellectual system, understanding is practical and referential; understanding a text occurs when we compare it with a text on a subject we already know. Accordingly, to understand any text, or in other words, any subject, we deal with both a whole and a set of parts. Thus, in the hermeneutic circle, the part or parts are understood within the framework of the whole, and the whole is understood in relation to the part or parts. Based on this, the relationship of the whole text of the Gathas with the seven key words (*Spenta Mainyu*, *Vohu Manah*, *Asha*, *Khshathra*, *Spenta Armaiti*, *Haurvatat*, and *Ameretat*) is examined, and then the relationship of these seven words as parts with the whole text is analyzed and interpreted. The main hypothesis of the article is the religious nature of wisdom and its determining role in political thought within the Gathas.

### **1. Political Thought in the Pre-Zoroastrian Era**

Understanding politics and political thought in the period before the advent of Zarathustra is possible to some extent through knowledge of

the myths of the Vedic era, i.e., the common period of Iranians and Indians. With due caution, it can be said that comparative mythology refers to a form of mythological study that systematically compares and contrasts themes and narratives of myths from different cultures and peoples, especially those with common origins, in order to reconstruct the ancient myths of these cultures and peoples and thereby access their common political and social domains. Some researchers believe that Indo-Iranian peoples in the Vedic era shared a unified worldview based on a certain ideology, fundamentally relying on a tripartite structure of gods: those associated with spiritual-sovereign action, heroic-warrior action, and productive/artisan action. (Dumezil, 2016/1395: 83)

## **2. Common Indo-Iranian Gods**

### **2.1. Mithra**

The term 'Mehr' appears in the Rigveda as 'Mitra', in the Avesta as 'Mithra', in Pahlavi as 'Mitra', and in Persian as 'Mehr'. (Mashkour, 1968/1347: 124). The oldest written document mentioning the god Mehr is clay tablets dating back to 1400 BCE. One of these tablets, a treaty between the Hittites and Mitanni, names two ancient gods, Mithra and Varuna. (Rezaei, 2009/1388: 55-56). Mithra and Varuna form a dual combination of gods from the Vedic era, described as cosmic rulers whose function was to establish order in the world of gods and humans. The function of this dual combination was also related to covenants and speech. The influence of the god Mehr on Iranian political thought was so profound that Iran has been considered the land of covenant. (Hinnells, 2010/1389: 119-121). In the Vedic era, the god Mehr was at the head of the ruling and spiritual gods. (Rezaei, 2002/1381: 699).

According to the oldest Indian texts and sources, the god Mehr had two important functions: 1. As a spiritual ruler (in union with Varuna), upholding the material and moral order of the world was their duty; 2. Bestowing blessings, including bringing rain and presiding over rivers (in union with Varuna), was another function of these gods. (Bahār, 2001/1380: 67).

### **2.2. Varuna**

Mentioned as a great Indo-Iranian god in Iranian mythology, however, in Iranian ritual texts, Ahura Mazda (the Lord of Wisdom) replaced him. In the Indo-Iranian period, Varuna was the lord of the Adityas. The Adityas, sons of Aditi, were a group of Vedic gods, equivalent and similar to the Iranian Amesha Spentas (Immortal Saints), at whose head was Ahura Mazda. Varuna was a wise god aware of the secrets of all the world and its creations. (Bahār, 2010/1389: 463-468). In the Vedic era, the god Varuna gradually lost his function and sovereignty. (Veronica, 1994/1373: 16). In Iran, due to encountering a different environment and geography, as well as the native culture of the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamian culture, Varuna lost his previous role and function, which is why his name does not appear in Iranian mythology. (Bahār, 2010/1389: 468-463).

### **2.3. Indra**

A prominent god in Indo-Iranian mythology, the god of the warrior class. His name appears in the Boghazköi tablets of Asia Minor (1400 BCE) mentioned in the Vedas. The etymology of the name Indra is uncertain, but it is possibly related to 'indu', meaning a drop of water. In the Vedic era, Indra was the god of thunder, the destroyer of demons of drought and darkness, the saviour and liberator of imprisoned waters and lights, thus possessing a spatial rather than celestial character. Based on his function, Indra was considered the god of battle, guiding and leading the Aryans to victory over the natives of the Indus Valley. (Bahār, 2010/1389: 469). Some believe that the mythological characteristics and functions of the god Indra are manifested in the personality and traits of Rostam, the hero of the Shahnameh. (see Bahār, 2010/1389: 471).

### **2.4. Ashvins**

The Ashvins are two gods mentioned in Hittite inscriptions as 'na-sa-at-ti' and in the Avesta as Haurvatat and Ameretat. The Ashvins form the last and third group in the hierarchical structure of the Indo-Iranian divine world. Their Mitannian title appears in Vedic writings as 'Nasatya', used as an epithet for the Ashvins. Their function can also be linked to similar Indo-European gods and the Iranian figures Haurvatat and Ameretat. It can be said that their primary function pertained to bestowing blessings and the environment. (Bahār,

2010/1389: 471-473). This group of gods included the dawn goddess Surya, Savitar (god of the sun's rays), Agni (god of fire), and Soma (god of the sacred plant). Political thought in the Vedic era, the period of shared Indo-Iranian existence, was derived from myths and gods, each having a specific function. Natural elements played a pivotal role in society and its administration. Each component of nature, through the evolution of ritual beliefs and practices, manifested as a specific deity with a particular function. Hence, during this era, we encounter various gods who ruled over the destiny of the world and humanity. However, generally speaking, based on the mythological theory of Dumézil, which is founded on comparison and analogy, Indo-Iranian political thought can be schematized as follows: [Diagram would be here in original].

### **3. Authenticity and Nature of the Gathas Text**

The Avesta is the shared heritage of Iranian culture, the oldest written text of the Iranians, and the religious scripture of the followers of Zoroastrianism. What exists today as the Avesta is one-quarter of the Avesta from the Sasanian era and consists of five parts: Yasna, Yashts, Visperad, Vendidad, and Khordeh Avesta. (Doustkhah, 1992/1371: 3). The oldest and holiest part of the Avesta is referred to as 'Gāthās' or 'Gathas'. In Pahlavi language and texts, it appears as 'Gās', plural 'Gāsān'. In ancient Brahmanic and Buddhist books, 'Gāthās' appears as 'Gathas', meaning poetic passages interspersed with prose. The Avestan Gathas are precisely mentioned in this form, and they are called Gathas because of their rhythmic nature. Generally, Gathas mean and imply a regular hymn and poetry. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 81). The poetic nature of the Gathas does not refer to prosodic or Arabic poetry forms, but rather to proximity to the syllabic meters of other Indo-European peoples. (Jahangiri, 1999/1378: 402).

Mary Boyce believes that linguistically, the Gathas are comparable to the Rigveda, which was composed around 1700 BCE. The style and structure of the Gathic hymns and their notable elements indicate the emergence of Zarathustra before 1000 BCE. (Boyce, Vol. 1, 1997/1376: 17). Arthur Christensen attributes the Gathas to Zarathustra himself, describing these hymns as prophetic sermons

composed in poetic form. (Christensen, 2009/1388: 50). Thematically, the Gathas are coherent from beginning to end, and importantly, Zarathustra's own explicit acknowledgements and confessions confirm that the Gathic hymns are his own, as he names himself sixteen times in the Gathas. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 81). Historical and linguistic evidence supports the authenticity of the Gathas and their attribution to Zarathustra. Although the exact time of Zarathustra's emergence is unknown, considering the range of theories and the linguistic differences between the Gathas and other parts of the Avesta, it can be inferred that Zarathustra lived between 1000 and 1200 BCE. (Amouzgar & Tafazzoli, 2007/1386: 15-23). Another reason for dating Zarathustra's appearance to around 1000 BCE is sociological: there is not the slightest trace of Mesopotamian culture or system in the Gathas. No sign of complex civil and urban society, Babylonian sciences, especially astronomy and astrology, exists in the Gathas. The milieu of the Gathas is a simple, primitive society devoid of any influence from Mesopotamian religions or Semitic beliefs. (Ashtiani, 1995/1374: 61). In the Gathas text, transactions are barter-based, and there is no mention of iron, whose discovery dates to after the first millennium BCE. (Oshidari, 2007/1386: 35).

Zarathustra in the Gathas (Yasna 6:33) calls himself 'Zaotar', a term used for a 'religious man' possessing complete spiritual qualifications. 'Zaotar' appears in Pahlavi texts as 'Zut'. The language of the Gathas is a blend of rational-explanatory language and intuitive-poetic language. In the Gathas, there is no mention of a specific race, land, or tribe; what is expressed in these ancient hymns is a prescription for all human beings and human societies. The political and social thought contained in the Gathas can be considered 'Urban-Human' thought. The secret to the endurance of the Gathas lies in their poetic form, which has been transmitted orally across generations and has endured.

It is possible that in the past, a poetic text was interwoven with this poetic order of the Gathas, but it has not been lost over time. (Pourdavoud, 2008/1387: 88-89).

In summary, based on historical, linguistic, and sociological evidence and reasons, the Gathas are an authentic text, either

composed by Zarathustra himself or by his followers who were chronologically close to the time of his emergence. In this research, we have utilized translations of the Gathas text from the oldest Persian translation (by Ebrahim Pourdavoud), the most recent Persian translation (by Reza Moradi Ghiasabadi), and the translation by Sasan Abtin Far.

#### **4. The Concept of Wisdom (Kherad) in the Gathas Text**

In the Gathas, wisdom, as a fundamental and guiding force, plays a pivotal role in shaping ethics-oriented politics, such that politics is not defined based on power-seeking, but rather through the seven manifestations of Ahura Mazda: Spenta Mainyu (Holy/Bounteous Spirit/Wisdom), Vohu Manah (Good Thought), Asha (Truth = Cosmic Law/Order), Khshathra (Ideal Sovereignty/Dominion), Spenta Armaiti (Holy Devotion/Patience/Tolerance), Haurvatat (Wholeness/Perfection), and Ameretat (Immortality). Each of the seven manifestations constitutes a part of Ahura Mazda's wisdom and a component of His power. Therefore, it can be posited that in the political thought of the Gathas, desirable politics is only possible through wisdom—a wisdom that possesses a religious nature.

Wisdom in the Gathas is one with the Great Lord, Ahura Mazda, and holds the primary role and position in political thought. Wisdom in the Gathas is equivalent to knowledge and is introduced as the holy wisdom of Ahura Mazda: "For the true knowledge of Mazda, who is the father of truth, one must perform the best action towards this holy wisdom." (Yasna 47:2).

The meaning of the term wisdom (Kherad) in the Gathas appears in the second component of Vohu Manah. 'Manah' derives from the Avestan and Old Persian root meaning to know, remember, and comprehend. (Yasna 31:11; cf. Boyce, 1995/1374: 271).

Semantically, wisdom is precisely equivalent to the Greek term 'nous', encompassing both 'wisdom' and 'common sense/reason'. In this sense, wisdom signifies both the power of understanding and perception, and divine thought—the thought through which God creates and sustains the world. The essence and core of the Gathas text is the knowledge and recognition of the existence of a Holy Goodness (Ahura Mazda), who is the Lord and Master of wisdom and the entire

universe. In Pahlavi, 'kherad' appears as 'xrad', meaning reason/intellect. (Mackenzie, 2000/1379: 164). The root origin of 'kherad' (wisdom) implies freedom and liberation, whereas the root of 'aql' (reason/intellect) implies limitation and restriction. 'Kherad' should be considered a higher order than 'aql'; in other words, wisdom (kherad) transcends reason (aql) and signifies the application of reason. The geometry of the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas, as the foundations of political thought, is manifested in the fabric of political sovereignty across historical periods. Therefore, writing this article can serve as a basis for research entitled "Examining the Relationship between Wisdom and Politics in the Historical Periods of Ancient Iran."

## **5. The Manifestation of Political Thought in the Gathas**

### **5.1. Ontology in the Gathas**

From one perspective, political thought is the manifestation of an attitude towards the world and how to live within it. In other words, political thought is born from a worldview and a particular attitude towards what exists. The ontology present in the Gathas is a geometric design, orderly and purposive, set by the Creator of existence to organize and order the spiritual (Mainyu) and material (Giti) worlds. To paraphrase Nietzsche: "If the soul and essence of all great spirits were gathered together, none would be able to create a single one of Zarathustra's sayings." (Nietzsche, 2017/1396: 172). He believed that Zarathustra was the sole proposer of the question of how humanity can overcome its humanity. (Nietzsche, 2003/1382: 338). Perhaps Nietzsche's view points to this passage in the Gathas: "The only one I know here who has listened to our teaching is Zarathustra Spitama; he desires that we grant him eloquent and pleasing speech." (Yasna 29:8). The Gathas speak of two opposing spirits: Light, knowledge, and wisdom are attributed to Spenta Mainyu, while ignorance (lack of wisdom), corruption, and inclination towards destruction are attributed to Angra Mainyu. In the Gathas, Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom) has taken the eternal sky as its covering and, in a primordial choice, chose truth (asha) and founded life. (cf. Yasna 30:3-5). This indicates the consubstantiality of Creator and creature, or in other

words, the begetter and the begotten, which is considered the first creation in Zoroastrianism. (Yasna 44:7).

Spenta Mainyu is the manifestation of the Holy Wisdom of God, whose entire being is wisdom and knowledge. Creation first appeared through the wisdom of Ahura Mazda and by means of Holy Wisdom (Spenta Mainyu). (Alikhani, 2000/1379: 74-75). In the Gathas, a general concept is used for the name of God; no names of Indo-Iranian (Vedic) gods like Varuna, Mithra, etc., are mentioned. The division of the world into two opposing poles, Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu, has extended to the division of rulers and kings into two categories: good and bad. The main name of God, the true sovereign of the spiritual and material worlds, in the Gathas is 'Mazda', meaning the Great Wise Creator or the Wise Creator, implying the concept of Creator, while 'Ahura' is an attribute of the Lord. In the Gathas, the word 'Mazda' appears 180 times, often alone without the prefix or suffix 'Ahura'. The concept of God in the Gathas primarily belongs to Mazda, and the beginning of the Gathas speaks of Ahura Mazda, to whom Zarathustra prays. (Yasna 28:1a). And in Yasna 28:5: "Will we find the path to obeying the call of conscience and the Ahuric command towards Mazda?" Although in the Gathas, the Wise God transcends both the Good Spirit (Spenta Mainyu) and the Evil Spirit (Angra Mainyu) and is considered the Creator of both, in later historical periods, Ahura Mazda became identified with Spenta Mainyu, thus opposing Angra Mainyu. Zarathustra, by obeying Mazda the Wise God, steps onto the Ahuric path. (Ashtiani, 1995/1374: 132-137).

Zoroastrianism in the Gathas is a monotheistic faith; the notion of dualism pertains to later Zoroastrian periods. The oneness of God in the Gathas extends to the sovereignty of kings in historical periods, manifesting in their political thought. The ruler governs as a manifestation of the sovereignty of the Wise God over society and holds a multifaceted role; his mission is to guide and lead society towards perfections. Some sources also mention the oneness and monotheism of the Zoroastrian religion. (cf. Towfiqi, 2002/1381: 65). Martin Haug was among the first to declare the mistake of those believing in dualism in Zoroastrianism, writing: Zoroastrianism is a

monotheistic faith, and dualism has no place in it. (Ashtiani, 1995/1374: 142). Bartholomae also states regarding the monotheistic nature of Zoroastrianism: "Zarathustra's fundamental innovation was replacing the multitude of existing gods with a single Wise God (Ahura Mazda)." (Ashtiani, 1995/1374: 141). What is certain is that in the environment and time of Zarathustra's emergence, ancestor worship, veneration of natural phenomena and elements, and belief in multiple gods existed. The emergence of Zarathustra and his propagation of doctrines such as monotheism and the tendency to concentrate power in a single God, along with the cosmic struggle between good and evil, brought about profound transformations in the theoretical foundations of Iranian political thought.

### **5.2. Anthropology in the Gathas**

'Ashavan' is a term used both in the Gathas and in later Avestan texts to mean holy and pure, as a worthy attribute for a human being. 'Ashavan' originally meant possessor of truth/holiness, appearing as 'Atavan' in Old Persian and 'Ratavan' in Indian (Sanskrit). 'Ashavan' was said of one who walked the path of Asha (Truth = Law) and benefited from it in their spiritual and moral evolution. The Ashavan was the human who, through conscious choice, selected the religion of truth, attaining a vision enabling them to choose the beauties of truth and see the ugliness of falsehood. (Mahmoudi, 2020/1399: 19). Yasna 29:5 states about the Ashavan: "My mother and the soul of creation raised their hands to Ahura Mazda, praising Him that He may not allow the righteous to decay, nor allow the follower of falsehood to overcome the righteous workers." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 139). Yasna 30:3 also states: "These two primal twin spirits, who manifested themselves at the beginning of existence, one is good in thought, word, and deed, the other is evil. Between these two, the wise man (Ashavan) must choose good, not the ugly." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 143). The anthropological orientation in Zoroastrianism in the Gathas regarding humanity and its salvation and happiness is not limited to a specific time; moreover, it is trans-spatial and not exclusive to a particular realm or land, as it emphasizes universal absolute human values and criteria. The Ashavan human in the Gathas, equipped with the power of wisdom, can choose truth against falsehood. This idea, which in

Zoroastrianism is a kind of political, social, and ethical philosophy, places humanity at the center of existence. The Ashavan human is the result of the rule of a sovereign whose function is not merely political but who is also a guide, leading humanity towards becoming Ashavan from various aspects.

### **5.3. Eschatology in the Gathas; The End of Governance**

'Saoshyant': This word in Avestan is 'saoshyant', in Middle Persian 'Sōshāns', and in Persian means benefactor and saviour. 'Saoshyant' is an agent noun from the root 'sav', used in ancient Iranian languages meaning to benefit and save. (Pourdavoud, 2002/1381: 94). Some scholars, like Bartholomae, have translated 'Saoshyant' as saviour, believing the singular refers to Zarathustra himself and the plural to those who assist him in salvation. (Movahedian Attar et al., 2014/1393: 36). Lommel, another researcher, translated 'Saoshyant' as helper. (Rashed Mohassel, 2006/1385: 72). Kellens and Pirart, other scholars, introduced the meaning of Saoshyant in the Gathas as the performer of the sacrifice. (Movahedian Attar et al., 2014/1393: 36).

The word 'Saoshyant' appears six times in the Gathas: three times in singular and three times in plural. It seems that where the singular form is used, Zarathustra himself is intended, as according to Zoroastrian teachings, he initiated the path of the Saoshyants and is indeed the first among them. However, where the plural is used, it refers to Saoshyants who will come in the future and guide the world towards the path of truth through their teachings, just as Zarathustra did. (cf. Soroushparvar, 2016/1395: 30-31).

The term 'Saoshyant' has no precedent in Vedic (Indo-Iranian) texts and appears to be mentioned for the first time in the Gathas. Various passages in the Gathas refer directly or indirectly to Saoshyant. In Yasna 34:3, 'Saoshyant' appears in the plural, referring to those who have faith in wisdom and the practice of wisdom. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 177). Yasna 34:6 speaks of the evolution and renovation of the world in the material realm. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 181). Yasna 45:11 speaks of Saoshyant in the future: "Therefore, in the future, one will humble the demons and those who wish to hinder Zarathustra... The saviour judge will become like a friend and brother, O Mazda Ahura." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 219).

In the Gathas, Yasna 45:9 and Yasna 53:2, Zarathustra calls himself Saoshyant, meaning one from whose existence benefit arises and who is a benefactor. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 219, 269). Where 'Saoshyant' appears in the plural, they refer to the leaders and successors of Zarathustra who strived to propagate Zoroastrianism and guide people towards the path of truth. (Yasna 34:13; Yasna 46:3). Zarathustra's strategy for establishing his sovereignty was to present new teachings to challenge the existing ruling system. The environment and time in which Zarathustra appeared suffered from disorder and chaos. As a reformer, Zarathustra did not negate all past legacies; rather, he sought reform. To establish his sovereignty, he presented grand themes of ontology, anthropology, and eschatology. Eschatology created hope and depicted an ideal sovereignty at the end of the world. In the matter of the Zoroastrian Saoshyant(s), the important point is the gradual nature of the reform process and its connection to wisdom and the practice of wisdom – wisdom that plays the primary role in reforming humanity and guiding it towards becoming Ashavan (the wise/knowing human), and also plays the main role in the renovation of the world at its end.

#### **6. Manifestations of the Masculine Wisdom of Ahura Mazda; The Divine Model of Politics**

In the Gathas, Zarathustra (or Ahura Mazda) possesses seven special manifestations: Spenta Mainyu, Vohu Manah, Asha (Artā), Khshathra, Spenta Armaiti, Haurvatat, and Ameretat. Each of these manifestations expresses a spiritual (Mainyu) concept and form of the wisdom of Ahura Mazda. They are, in fact, the components of divine power, as the entire being of God is associated with wisdom and the practice of wisdom. Each of these mentioned manifestations is considered a multiplied wisdom emanating from Ahura Mazda, the Lord of all existence. Here, based on the relationship of the whole to the part(s) and vice versa, according to Schleiermacher's theory of the hermeneutic circle, we examine, explain, and analyze the relationship of Ahura Mazda with the seven manifestations and vice versa.

The seven manifestations of Ahura Mazda are depicted as a precise and coherent system. Each, as a component of power, represents a part of the function and role of the Great God. In this

model, politics is a part of Zoroastrianism, subsumed under its ethical system, and wisdom has a ritual nature. Considering the depicted model of the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas, it can be said that there is a tent-like image in the Gathas, viewing God, existence, and humanity as interconnected and continuous; any rupture or disharmony is imagined as chaos and disorder. Political thought in the Gathas follows the order and hierarchy of manifestations that, while existing horizontally alongside each other (cf. Yasna 31:21), their relationship is vertical, meaning each is a prerequisite for the other.

The manifestations of Ahura Mazda are mentioned in later Avestan texts (Yashts, Visperad, Khordeh Avesta) and subsequently in Pahlavi texts and later Iranian traditions as the 'Amesha Spentas' (Immortal Holy Ones/Bounteous Immortals). In later texts, the manifestations of Ahura Mazda assume a lofty and abstract concept, but in the Gathas, they are concrete forms, each being part of the infinite wisdom of Ahura Mazda. Their relationship with the whole is like the relationship of rays to the sun. Iranian political thought in the Gathas is derived from the relationship between wisdom and politics and the theory of divine sovereignty. The relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas is manifested in the Mazdayasnian manifestations. In the Gathas, wisdom and the practice of wisdom dominate all subjective and objective domains; therefore, there is a determining relationship between wisdom and politics. Each of the manifestations of Ahura Mazda, in historical periods, has been mentioned as attributes and characteristics of the ideal sovereign (Shahryar), as the ideal sovereign is considered the representative of Ahura Mazda in the material world (Giti).

### **6.1. Spenta Mainyu**

Spenta Mainyu. The God of Zarathustra, Ahura Mazda, is characterized by being the Wise Creator, the source of order, the upholder of cosmic balance, and the follower of truth. At the beginning, for the creation and administration of existence, He engaged in the creation of spiritual (Mainyu) manifestations, at the head of which was Spenta Mainyu, or Holy Wisdom: "To praise the creation of Holy Wisdom, Mazda is exalted to seek help; before

everything, I shall satisfy Asha, Vohu Manah, and the soul of creation." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 131). Spenta Mainyu is the first manifestation of Ahura Mazda. In the Gathas, He who has taken the eternal sky as His covering is the Holy and Bounteous Spirit who, in a primordial choice against his twin Angra Mainyu, chose truth (asha) and founded life. (cf. Yasna 30:3-5). In the Gathas, the creation of humanity and thought began through the Holy Wisdom, Spenta Mainyu—the wisdom that manifests the Wise Lord, Ahura Mazda: "When You, O Mazda, on the first day created humanity, religion, and the power of thought from Your Holy Wisdom, when You created action and will, You intended everyone to act according to their own inner conviction and will." (Yasna 31:11). In Yasna 33:12, Zarathustra asks Ahura Mazda to grant him ability through the Holy Force, which is wisdom. (Pourdavoud, 1947/1326: 173). Yasna 43:2 also states: "Grant paradise to the one who desires paradise, through Your Holy and Merciful Wisdom." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 189).

The best and most excellent essence innate to humanity is Holy Wisdom. Holy Wisdom is the enemy of the demon (Ahriman). To combat Ahriman, one must move following Good Thought, in harmony with Truth, and obey all manifestations of Ahura Mazda to achieve salvation and immortality: "O Mazda, this kind of Holy Wisdom, the deceitful have fallen away from, not the followers of truth; whether one possesses much wealth or little, they must be a friend and follower of truth and opposed to the deceitful." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 227). Spenta Mainyu, or Holy Wisdom, is effectively the intermediary of Ahura Mazda's existential grace; through Him, the world was created. Spenta Mainyu, with the help of other manifestations of Ahura Mazda, is the intermediary for humanity to attain knowledge, achieve salvation, and reach union with God, whose entire being is wisdom and knowledge: "O Mazda, You are the Holy Father of this Wisdom, O You who bring joy to the world; having consulted with the Pure Mentality (Vohu Manah) through Armaiti (Spenta Armaiti), You bring peace and tranquility." (Yasna 47:3). Ontology in the Gathas emphasizes the separation between Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu. Creation in the Gathas is hierarchical, with Ahura Mazda at the head of all existence—God who

is entirely wisdom, light, and radiance. Through His first manifestation, i.e., Holy Wisdom (Spenta Mainyu), He initiates creation. The consistent religious use of the term 'Spenta' has a meaning similar to the English 'holy', originally meaning powerful and strong. (Boyce, 1995/1374: 26). Given the status of Holy Wisdom in the Gathas and the struggle between the Ahuric and demonic forces, which determined change and transformation in the system of creation, and their confrontation indicates their importance in Zoroastrianism, because the supremacy of either of the aforementioned forces results in the manifestation of their effects in the world.

Iranian political thought in the ancient period derives from this very ontology of the Gathas. The division of rulers and sovereigns into good and bad rulers/sovereigns stems from this duality present at the beginning of creation in the Gathas, as political thought is born from the worldview and type of attention towards the origin of creation and living in the world. In Iranian political thought in the Gathas and across historical periods, the reflection of cosmic order can be observed in the structure they have described and explained for it. Just as at the beginning of creation, there is a struggle between Ahuric and demonic forces – on one side, Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom), light, and radiance; on the other, impure wisdom (Angra Mainyu), darkness, and gloom – this very issue created the distinction between the good sovereign and the bad sovereign in Iranian political thought. The good sovereign is considered the agent, representative, and best creation of Ahura Mazda, while the bad sovereign was a manifestation of impure wisdom, oppression, and tyranny. In historical periods, the ideal sovereign's confrontation with the demon was a reflection of the battle between good and evil. Political thought in the Gathas is based on a ritual whose fundamental and primary reflections rest upon Holy Wisdom – wisdom derived from the religious concepts and doctrines of Zoroastrianism.

### **6.2. Vohu Manah (Bahman = Good Thought)**

Vohu Manah comprises 'Vohu' meaning good/beautiful, and 'Manah' meaning to think. Thus, Vohu Manah means good thinking or good thought. Pourdavoud explains that 'Vohu' (meaning good/beautiful)

is the same as 'Ho' at the beginning of 'Honar' (virtue/skill). 'Vohu' in Old Persian is equivalent to 'Vasu' in Sanskrit. 'S' and 'H' are interchanged in Sanskrit and Avestan pronunciations; for example, in the words 'Hind' and 'Sind', 'Ahura' and 'Asura', 'Hāiti' and 'Sāiti', and also 'Honar' and 'Sonar'. 'Vohu' is pronounced in Pahlavi as 'her', 'vah', or 'veh', originally 'bah' or the comparative 'better'. The second component 'Manah' equals Sanskrit 'Manas', is pronounced 'meishn' in Pahlavi and 'Manesh' (mentality) in Persian. This term derives from the root 'manah', meaning in Avestan and Old Persian 'to think', 'to know', 'to remember', and 'to comprehend'. (Pourdavoud, 1947/1326: 73). Vohu Manah is introduced in the Gathas as one of the manifestations of Ahura Mazda and is the most important manifestation after Spenta Mainyu. Examining the manifestations in the Gathas reveals that these are abstract and understandable concepts. Generally, they represent the supreme manifestations of the Great God. According to the Gathas, all humans are created with the capacity for good mentality (Vohu Manah), and good thought is a reflection of Holy Wisdom. (Mehr, 2008/1387: 14-15). The importance of Good Thought in politics and political thought within the Gathas is such that it is repeated 130 times, emphasizing the value of good thinking and its effect on achieving perfection and tranquility. (Sakhai, 2003/1382: 141). Good Thought was a crucial component of Ahura Mazda's power for governing the spiritual and material worlds.

In Yasna 28:2, Zarathustra asks Ahura Mazda and Good Thought (Vohu Manah) to grant him and his followers the material and spiritual glory of both worlds. The third verse of the same Yasna states: "I am that one, O Mazda Ahura, O Asha, and O Vohu Manah, who invokes you for those whom Armaiti (Spenta Armaiti) adorns the perishable realm." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 131). In this hymn, Zarathustra seeks the help and support of Ahura Mazda and His manifestations. The companions and followers of Zarathustra must also seek help and assistance from the manifestations of the Great God in their thoughts and methods to become closer to the One Lord. In the Gathas and within the Mazdean belief system, Vohu Manah, or Good Thought, is the first creation and manifestation of Holy Wisdom (Spenta Mainyu), with Ahura Mazda acting as the father, nurturer,

source, and spring for Good Thought. (Yasna 31:8). However, in a metaphorical sense in the Gathas, Vohu Manah is mentioned as the son of Ahura Mazda. (Yasna 45:4).

Some scholars have noted five specific functions for Vohu Manah: 1 - The First Emanation or First Creation; 2 - Wisdom, Thought, Knowledge, and Philosophy; 3 - Esoteric knowledge, divine guide, and religious knowledge; 4 - Accompaniment of intellect and soul; 5 - Judgment of human deeds on Resurrection Day. (Moftouni et al., 2018/1397: 14). The systematic relationship between Vohu Manah and other manifestations of Ahura Mazda is repeatedly mentioned in the Gathas. Yasna 28:10, Yasna 30:10, Yasna 34:12 & 14, and Yasna 43:2 refer to the systematic relationship and cooperation between Vohu Manah and Asha (Truth = Cosmic Law). (For more, see Moradi Ghiasabadi, 2013/1392: 33-71).

Hinnells considers Vohu Manah the firstborn of God, positioned on the right side of Ahura Mazda, acting as His advisor. Furthermore, Vohu Manah is the divine manifestation active within humans, guiding them toward God. (Hinnells, 2010/1389: 71). Dumézil believed that the manifestation Vohu Manah corresponds to the god Mithra (Mehr), a god from the Vedic era. (Ashtiani, 1995/1374: 180-181). Vohu Manah's role in delivering revelation and appointing Zarathustra as prophet is mentioned, implicitly or explicitly, in various Gathic hymns. (cf. Yasna 29:8; Yasna 33:6; Yasna 34:7; Yasna 44:8). Furthermore, Vohu Manah plays a fundamental role in Ahura Mazda's bestowal of innate wisdom upon humanity. (Yasna 31:11; Sasanfar, 2011/1390: 271).

'Akamanah' meaning Evil/Bad Thought stands opposite Vohu Manah and is one of the arch-demons. Akamanah holds the primary position among demons, comparable to 'Baal' in the Bible. John Milton says of this demon: "He was the one who, next to Satan, held the highest rank, and consequently, in wickedness, was among those closest to him." (Milton, 2003/1382: 13). Vohu Manah, as the manifestation of Good Thought and the First Creation, is the foundation of good thinking in the Gathas. The lexical system of the Gathas is an interconnected whole, through the analysis and explanation of which the relationship between wisdom and politics

can be described and delineated. Good Thought, besides having its specific function in the Gathas, systematically relates to other manifestations of Ahura Mazda, depicting the attributes and characteristics of the ideal, wise sovereign. In summary, Vohu Manah is the first component for exercising the power of the sovereign and ideal ruler, representing Good Thought or, in other words, the good thinking of the ideal ruler. Zarathustra, through this Vohu Manah, benefits from divine knowledge. (Yasna 28:1). In the Gathas, Zarathustra seeks above all to satisfy Vohu Manah and the soul of creation. (Yasna 45:6). The wisdom and knowledge of the ideal sovereign are concealed within Vohu Manah and manifested in governance. Vohu Manah, as Good Thought and the first component of power for the ruler, stands in opposition and contrast to Evil Thought. The sovereign, whose existence originates from Holy Wisdom (Spenta Mainyu) and moves with Good Thought to implement Cosmic Order (Asha), can ideally manage the universe as the ideal sovereign and agent of Ahura Mazda in the material world, based on wisdom and the practice of wisdom.

### **6.3. Asha Vahishta**

Asha Vahishta consists of two parts: 'Asha' meaning purity, truth, and 'Vahishta' meaning best. In the Gathas, often the first part 'Asha' is used. 'Asha' is a term with a wide range of meanings, including truth, righteousness, reality, law, conformity, social order, divine order, purity, and holiness. 'Vahishta' means paradise/heaven in Persian; the second month of the year, Ordibehesht, derives from this term. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 55; Oshidari, 2007/1386: 93; Rezaei, 2009/1388: 91).

Asha, as the third component of Ahura Mazda's power in the Gathas and the third stage of the Mazdean worldview, plays the primary role in establishing true and moral order throughout existence. Order in existence is indeed modeled cosmologically on primordial truths and the principles of spiritual and divine rules. Asha is a symbol of world order, divine law, and moral order in the universe. Not only does it establish order on earth, but it also concerns the order of the spiritual world and hell. The earthly representative and symbol of Asha is fire. (Amouzgar, 2012/1391: 16). Historical evidence

suggests that the law of Asha was gradually formed and evolved over hundreds or even thousands of years. When the Indo-Iranians were engaged in pastoral life on the steppes of Central Asia, the concept of Asha may have been derived from the shepherds' awareness of the recurring rhythms of life. Gods such as Mithra, Varuna, lords of covenant and oath, seemingly reflect their attention to the laws governing society and their fear of violating these laws—a fear that made them observe these laws both openly and secretly. (Boyce et al., 2009/1388: 89). Asha in the Gathas is one of the components of power and manifestations of Ahura Mazda, positioned at the highest levels of existence and perfection: "Thus I recognized You, O Mazda, as the first source of unbegotten creation; in thought, young and pioneering in existence, I perceived with my inner eye that You are the father and nurturer of Good Thought, the creator of the truth/order of the universe, and the Lord in all affairs of the world." (Yasna 31:8; cf. Sasanfar, 2011/1390: 259).

In Yasna 28:1 & 2, Asha is mentioned alongside Vohu Manah. Based on the law of Asha, in Yasna 30:7 & 8, every person is responsible for their own actions. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 131, 145). Yasna 34:6 & 11 state about Asha: "Ahura Mazda, with the help and assistance of Good Thought and Asha, will eradicate affliction and distress from the world, and the flourishing and perfection of the world will be achieved through the light of Good Thought and Asha." Asha is one of the most important factors of insight, clarity of vision, and wisdom. (Yasna 28:10). Another practical meaning of Asha is justice. (Yasna 30:8).

Asha, as cosmic order, operates in theological, ontological, and anthropological dimensions. Humanity, as a free and responsible being and the foremost creation, must make this order the measure of their behaviour in individual, social, and political spheres to become a complete mirror of it. The meaning of Asha transcends moral meanings; it refers to the spiritual and divine law established by the Wise God. Asha is the law whose eternal and everlasting manifestation and embodiment govern the material world (Giti). In general, Asha signifies the cosmic order and the comprehensive impersonal order by which all affairs of the world are regulated. (Payadeh Koohsar, 2007/1386: 66).

The term Asha is repeated 119 times in the Gathas. (Boyce, 2009/1388: 278). Comparing Iranian and Greek cultures, one can note that the Greeks began a new era where they set aside the ancient belief system and founded political philosophy abstractly, such that in shaping political thought, there was no connection between society and the cosmic order. In other words, they did not use the attention of governance to the cosmic order. However, unlike the Greeks, that ancient ideal—the continuity of society within the cosmic order—persisted and continued in Iranian political thought. (cf. Daylam Salehi, 2005/1384: 36-37).

### 6.3.1. Manifestations of Asha

1) **Wisdom:** Wisdom in the Gathas is the source and reservoir of all goodness, knowledge of order, justice, and knowledge (gnosis). With the help of wisdom, one can distinguish the right path from the wrong. According to the Gathas texts, wisdom is the motivator of creation and the first stage of the Zoroastrian worldview. Yasna 31:7 & 11 state: "Whoever increases truth through the power of his wisdom... When You, O Mazda, on the first day, created humanity, religion, and the power of thought from Your Wisdom." Asha is not only a creation of Ahura Mazda but also the means of knowing and recognizing Him. (Yasna 45:8).

2) **Fire:** Fire in the Gathas has a spiritual (Mainyu) aspect. There is a very close relationship between fire and Asha. Since ancient Iranians considered Asha one of the most important manifestations of Ahura Mazda, Asha, besides its ethical function as the embodiment of cosmic order, was also the custodian ruling over all types of fires. According to the teachings of the Gathas, fire is a ray of God's radiant light, the earthly symbol of Asha, and even a symbol of Ahura Mazda. (Yasna 31:3; Mahmoudabadi, 2009/1388: 165). Fire, as the symbol of Asha in the world, represented the wisdom and knowledge of Ahura Mazda. In later Avestan texts and historical periods, it acquired social, ritual, and political functions, even becoming the symbol of Zoroastrianism. Asha is one of the most important components of Ahura Mazda's power in the political thought within the Gathas text, upholding the law and order established in the spiritual and material worlds. The ideal sovereign, as the agent and representative of Ahura Mazda, must

strive to maintain and establish law and order in the world. The manifestations of Ahura Mazda in the Gathas are interconnected, each providing the ground for the manifestation of the next. Just as Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom), in His first act, setting the creation system in motion by Ahura Mazda's will, creates the first creation, Vohu Manah (Good Thought). Subsequently, Good Thought becomes the prelude to the manifestation and emergence of Asha (Law = Truth). Of course, each of the seven manifestations of Ahura Mazda, besides having its specific place in political thought, also possesses ethical functions.

#### **6.4. Khshathra Vairya (Khshathra)**

Khshathra Vairya (xsashtra-vairiia) is called 'Shahrewar' in Pahlavi and 'Shahrivar' in Persian. Its literal meaning is desirable sovereignty, ideal and perfect sovereignty, which brings about the ideal city/utopia. Khshathra Vairya is mentioned as 'Khshathra' in the Gathas. In later Avestan texts, it appears as 'Shahrivar', the third Amesha Spenta. In the spiritual worldview, it symbolizes the sovereignty and royal glory (Farrah) of Ahura Mazda in the spiritual and material worlds and was considered the guardian of the glory and victory of just sovereigns. Khshathra, as the symbol of Ahura Mazda's sovereignty, represents power and its material manifestation in the material world: the metal iron. In the Gathas, one of the five sections (Gathas) is named 'Vohu Khshathra Gatha', meaning Good Dominion/Good Realm. This Gatha, located in Yasna 51, consists of 22 verses. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 84-86). Khshathra, in the Vedic era, was 'Kshatriya', belonging to the second group of gods (heroic-military action, god Indra). The word Khshathra appears 62 times in the Gathas. Yasna 51:1 states about Khshathra: "That force worthy of choosing, Khshathra, is the best helper and source of wealth for the one who, with the help of truth, whatever lies in the midst of dust and the capacity for service, O Mazda, we use that best force for our works from now on." (Sasanfar, 2011/1390: 999). Khshathra is the first term that shapes our understanding of politics and political thought in ancient Iran clearly and distinctly, because politics and political thought in Iran derived all its terminologies and intellectual apparatus from religious texts, at the head of which are the Gathas, the oldest and most authentic religious text of the Iranians. Khshathra in the Gathas

has a wide and multiple range of meanings, including: ideal sovereign, celestial sovereignty, divine power, heavenly kingdom, self-mastery (self-control), desired reign, ruling force, divine force, and Ahuric dominion. (Rezaei, 2009/1388: 201-208). The hierarchical manifestations of Ahura Mazda can be depicted vertically: attaining Good Sovereignty (Khshathra) begins with Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom), then adorned with Vohu Manah, choosing Asha, and then reaching Khshathra, which is constructive power. The manifestations of Ahura Mazda are components of power, or in other words, His agents, arms, and advisors in expanding creation and ruling over the material and spiritual worlds. Yasna 31:21 states about the sovereignty of Ahura Mazda over all existence: "Mazda Ahura bestowed all power, perfection, and royal authority, with wholeness and immortality, truth, sovereignty, and holy mentality, upon that person who is His friend in thought and deed." In the Gathas, the sovereignty of Ahura Mazda is mentioned as 'Rāst Soltanat' (True Reign), which is Khshathra. (Yasna 34:5). Furthermore, Yasna 33:10 refers to the sovereignty of Ahura Mazda – a sovereignty that, with Good Thought, constructive power, and truth, can bring joy to people's lives. (cf. Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 173).

Nyberg says of Khshathra: "Khshathra is the most political concept among the concepts and manifestations in the Mazdean theological system. This word, on the one hand, means an assembly or field that reveals divine force, thus meaning realm, and also encompasses political force." (Nyberg, 1976/1355: 124-125). Hinnells states: "Khshathra is the most abstract attribute and manifestation, the embodiment of the glory and authority of Ahura Mazda." (Hinnells, 2010/1389: 74). Suhrawardi also mentions the sun as a perfect symbol for the attribute/manifestation of Khshathra, as it represents the union of light and authority in Illuminationist philosophy. (Corbin, 2001/1380: 292). Ahura Mazda, as the life-giving and guiding Lord, is both the sovereign and ruler of all existence and can grant sovereignty to the worthy who possess Good Thought and Truth. However, the primary prerequisite for acquiring sovereignty is the wisdom whose divine manifestation is Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom); whoever benefits from this wisdom becomes adorned with Good Thought and

Truth and becomes possessor of Khshathra—i.e., constructive power and good sovereignty. Ahura Mazda is both the sovereign and the bestower of sovereignty. The concept of Khshathra and its semantic load can be understood in conjunction with other manifestations of Ahura Mazda. Khshathra, although most directly related to the domain of power and politics, is the outcome and construct of Holy Wisdom, Good Thought, and Law. In summary, Khshathra, as the fourth manifestation of Ahura Mazda, expresses the political aspect and authority of the Wise God. On the other hand, it signifies the ideal sovereign, the embodiment of Ahura Mazda's rule and sovereignty in the spiritual and material worlds. In historical periods, Khshathra transformed into the term 'Shahanshah' (King of Kings). Khshathra in the Gathas is the primary source and reference for the vocabulary of political thought in historical periods. In later Avestan texts as 'Shahrivar', Khshathra held the primary role.

'Dazh Khshathra' (Evil Dominion) is the opposing counterpart to Khshathra. Zarathustra in the Gathas described the characteristics of his time with 'Daej' and 'Duz' (prefixes meaning evil/wrong). This negative prefix in the Gathas represents the realm of evil and wickedness. 'Goyas' and 'Garpans' are two titles for rulers in Zarathustra's time. A general overview of the Gathas allows us to divide the characteristics of bad rulers into internal (psychological) and behavioral traits. 'Bad wisdom' (Dazh Khshathra) and 'bad nature' were among the internal traits of bad rulers. Wrath/anger, tyranny, and self-will were among the external behaviors and characteristics of bad rulers. (cf. Mahmoudizadeh Dehbarzi, 2017/1396: 380-382). In Yasna 28:5, Zarathustra mentions brigands/plunderers: "I hope that with my own tongue, through this religion, I shall guide the brigands towards the One who is greater than all." In Yasna 28:6, he promises victory over enemies: "O Mazda, according to Your sure promise, with the help of Good Thought and Truth, I shall triumph over enemies." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 133). Yasna 48:10 mentions the ugly-deed Garpans and the evil-behaving sovereign. (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 235).

## **7. Manifestations of the Feminine Wisdom of Ahura Mazda; Components of Political-Social Power**

The division of the manifestations of Ahura Mazda into masculine and feminine categories demonstrates the equality and justice of Zoroastrianism, even within the world of words. The term Ahura Mazda itself is expressed in both masculine and feminine forms: its first part, Ahura, is masculine, and its second part, Mazda, is feminine. The first manifestation of Ahura Mazda, Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom), transcends gender and is introduced in the Gathas text as a spiritual force and the motivating factor of creation. Vohu Manah, Asha, and Khshathra – three components of Ahura Mazda's power – are considered metaphorically and culturally masculine in the Gathas. Spenta Armaiti (Spandarmad), Haurvatat, and Ameretat are the three feminine manifestations of Ahura Mazda, possessing political, social, and cultural functions and roles, forming part of the Gathic system. These three feminine manifestations complete the structure and system that reveal the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas.

### **7.1. Spenta Armaiti**

The first feminine manifestation in the Gathas is Spenta Armaiti (spanta-armaiti), meaning holy devotion/piety and sacred patience/forbearance. Spenta Armaiti, with a feminine symbol, is considered the daughter of Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda). (Amouzgar, 2012/1391: 17). Calling Spenta Armaiti the daughter of Ahura Mazda is metaphorical. (Yasna 31:1; Yasna 45:4). Spenta Armaiti embodies faithful obedience, religious harmony, and worship. Her place is on the left side of Ahura Mazda. It is said that she appeared before the Prophet Zarathustra and is a fitting symbol of the prophet's sincere obedience to his message and his sincere feeling. (Hinnells, 2010/1389: 74). Spenta Armaiti has various functions in the Gathas. On one hand, as the receiver of creation, she plays a creative role. (Yasna 34:1). On the other hand, since her earthly symbol is the Earth, her receptive role is defined and explained in relation to the Earth, as the Earth symbolizes humility, receptivity, and nurturing. Furthermore, Spenta Armaiti plays a role in individual conduct and moral elevation, a function repeatedly emphasized in the Gathas. (Yasna 28:3 & 7; Yasna 31:4 & 12; Yasna 43:10). Spenta Armaiti is also mentioned in the Gathas

as a symbol of sincere worship, submission, satisfaction, and holy servitude. (Yasna 47:2; Yasna 48:5 & 6).

Creativity is a distinct and specific attribute that, in the Gathas, only Spenta Mainyu and Spenta Armaiti possess besides Ahura Mazda. Spenta Armaiti, like Spenta Mainyu, is known by the attribute 'Spenta', meaning bounteous, augmenting, and holy, indicating her creativity and blessing. This creativity of Spenta Armaiti appears in various verses of the Gathas, such that this feminine manifestation is often personified and can even be the subject of an action for Ahura Mazda Himself: "The wise, intelligent man who, with deeds from pure mentality (Vohu Manah) and with holy Armaiti, who is augmenting and a friend of truth..." (Yasna 34:10). Other verses in the Gathas refer to the creativity of Spenta Armaiti: "O Armaiti, O most praised of all, you adorn the life of the future world; cultivate all livestock and lands, and nurture them for our sustenance." (Yasna 48:5). In another verse, the creativity of Spenta Armaiti is clearly stated: "O Angel Armaiti, grant stability and constancy to the human body." (Yasna 30:7). Another verse expresses her creativity: "... O Armaiti, grant me a share of wealth and benefit from a life of holy mentality." (Yasna 41:1). Spenta Armaiti, in later Avestan texts and historical periods, manifested as a goddess figure such as Daena (meaning religion or conscience), Anahita (meaning flowing waters), and Ashi (goddess of wealth and bounty). (Amouzgar, 2012/1391: 30-31). Spenta Armaiti, as one of the feminine manifestations of Ahura Mazda and components of His power in the Gathas, part of the feminine wisdom of Ahura Mazda, reveals a part of the ideal and perfect attributes and characteristics of sovereignty in political thought concerning the relationship between wisdom and politics.

Spenta Armaiti is a manifestation of Ahura Mazda; she symbolizes love, humility, and connection with the earth, holding a special place among the feminine components of divine power.

Her cosmic role is the guardianship of the earth and the manifestation of love and humility in the material world. Spenta Armaiti is connected to the earth and soil. In the belief of Zoroastrian followers, the earth is sacred because it is the place of nurturing and human life, and this sanctity is manifested through Spenta Armaiti.

Spenta Armaiti, metaphorically considered the daughter of Ahura Mazda, thus in literary texts and even common parlance, the land of Iran is referred to as 'motherland'.

### 7.2. Haurvatat

Haurvatat (haur-vatat) is the second feminine manifestation of Ahura Mazda in the Gathas. This word appears in Pahlavi as 'Khordad' or 'Hordad', meaning wholeness, perfection, and integrity. Haurvatat is composed of the Avestan adjective 'haurva' (Avestan: haurva, Persian: 'harva') and the feminine abstract noun suffix '-tat'. (Oshidari, 2007/1386: 212; Pourdavoud, 2011/1390: 57). Haurvatat in the Gathas plays a role in the spiritual and physical perfection of humanity. Spiritual and intellectual perfection is incomplete without physical perfection; thus, physical health and well-being are granted to humanity by Haurvatat. This not only means preserving the health and well-being of the human being but also includes preserving the health and well-being of villages, cities, and countries. (Iranī, 1982/1361: 105). The relationship among the components of Ahura Mazda's power in the Gathas is both horizontal and vertical, as all manifestations originate from Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom), and the existence of each depends on the component before it: "Ahura Mazda bestows all His perfect power and royal authority with wholeness (Haurvatat) and immortality (Ameretat), truth (Asha), sovereignty (Khshathra), and holy mentality (Vohu Manah) upon the one who is His friend in thought and deed." (Yasna 38:21).

Haurvatat, like other manifestations of Ahura Mazda, has both an ethical function and, in the context of ontological and anthropological beliefs as well as political and social functions, represents part of the principles and foundations of Zoroastrianism. The various functions of Haurvatat are expressed in Yasna 51:7, Yasna 34:11, and Yasna 45:10. In historical periods, Haurvatat appears as 'Khordad', its clearest meaning being wholeness, perfection, integrity, and a manifestation of the concept of salvation for humans. (Hinnells, 2010/1389: 75).

A passage states about Khordad: "Khordad is the lord of years, months, and days, because he is lord of all... and the prosperity of the earth comes from him, for in the year, if living well is possible, it is

because of Khordad." (cf. Bahār, 2010/1389: 153-154). Khordad, in later Avestan texts and historical periods, manifested as the water god 'Tir = Tishtar'. In the 'Tishtrya Yasht' of the Avesta, the battle of the god Tishtar with the demon Apausha (demon of drought and dryness) is narrated. (Amouzgar, 2012/1391: 24). Water is the earthly symbol of Haurvatat. In summary, the attributes and characteristics of Haurvatat, such as perfection, health, life-giving, protection, and guardianship of good life, are manifested in the motherly attributes of Haurvatat. These attributes and characteristics are also part of the attributes and characteristics of the ideal sovereign. Haurvatat has both an ethical function and is part of the feminine wisdom of Ahura Mazda, holds a special place in political thought in the Gathas, and plays a significant role in the enlivening of nature and its dynamism.

### **7.3. Ameretat**

In the Gathas, it is 'Ameretat' and in Pahlavi texts 'Amurdad'. Ameretat consists of three components: the first is a negative prefix, the second 'mer' from the Avestan root 'mar' meaning to die, and the third '-tat' a feminine suffix. Thus, Ameretat/Amurdad means deathlessness, immortality, perpetuity, and endurance. (Pourdavoud, 2011/1390: 59; Oshidari, 2007/1386: 302). In the Gathas, Ameretat is always mentioned alongside Haurvatat. These two manifestations of Ahura Mazda are associated with water and plants, and their gifts are wealth and livestock, representing ideals of strength, the source of life, and growth. (Hinnells, 2010/1389: 75). Some historians consider Ameretat the manifestation of salvation and immortality. (Amouzgar, 2012/1391: 18). Bahār considers the plant as the earthly symbol of Ameretat. (Bahār, 2010/1389: 152). In the Gathas, Ameretat is the seventh and final stage of the worldview and the last component of power and manifestation of Ahura Mazda. This manifestation is always accompanied by Haurvatat (Khordad = wholeness/perfection), meaning that when a human attains physical and spiritual perfection, they also achieve immortality and deathlessness, which is eternal good name/fame. (Rezaei, 2009/1388: 226). The accompaniment and simultaneity of Ameretat and Haurvatat in the Gathas, on one hand, points to a spiritual mystery: it seems sovereigns were aware that the path to immortality passes through

perfection and wholeness, and that in the state of perfection and immortality, they are inseparable. (Mehr, 2008/1387: 16-17). Immortality is the station of Ahura Mazda, and the sovereigns' effort to attain this station was an effort towards a station considered, from a spiritual and moral perspective, the highest, and from a governance perspective, reserved for sovereigns who sought to reach the final stage of the Zoroastrian worldview. Ameretat, like the other manifestations of Ahura Mazda, had both an ethical function and was part of the wisdom of Ahura Mazda and the last component of divine power that set creation in motion with Holy Wisdom (Spenta Mainyu).

Yasna 33:8 states about Ameretat: "What from me, O living one, Vohu Manah, and O Asha, a prayer offered like one from me, and the words I chant for their worship, count them as true and correct, O Haurvatat and O Ameretat, bestow upon me your own attributes." (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 171). In Yasna 45:10, Haurvatat and Ameretat are described as two spiritual rewards that Ahura Mazda will gift to humanity on the Last Day (hereafter). (Pourdavoud, 1999/1378: 211). Immortality as a spiritual reward is granted by Ahura Mazda to humanity in exchange for walking the path of perfection. (Yasna 44:5). A notable point about Ameretat is that, similar to Ahura Mazda (the All-Knowing, Eternal Wisdom), it contains the concept of immortality and deathlessness, indicating a kind of unity in the Mazdean ontological system. Just as the immortality of Ahura Mazda is inseparable from the concept of life, the soul (jan) as the worldly symbol of Ameretat is also a symbol of vitality, joy, and the factor of human survival and life. (Amouzgar, 2012/1391: 18; Hinnells, 2010/1389: 75). Abu Rayhan Biruni writes about Ameretat: "It is an angel commissioned to preserve the material world, to establish foods and medicines whose origin is plants, and which cure diseases." (Biruni, 1973/1352: 289). The relationship of Ahura Mazda to His manifestations is that of the manifestor to the manifestations. Ahura Mazda, a pure whole, lacking any external or objective manifestation in Himself, is the cause of these spiritual attributes that appear; thus, for humanity, these manifestations subsist in Him, yet at the same time, Ahura Mazda is predicated upon each of them, which is necessary because of His totality. In other words, the relationship of

Ahura Mazda to His manifestations is like the relationship of the sun to its rays. 'Zarich' (Zarīr), the last of the arch-demons, was considered the opponent and principal enemy of Ameretat. In later Avestan texts, the only attribute mentioned for Zarich is 'poison-maker'. (Dadagi, 1990/1369: 125).

It seems that Zarich, in this sense, stands in complete opposition and contrast to 'Hum' (Haoma), the immortal and sacred plant of Zoroastrianism, producing a poisoned, deathly beverage to destroy the immortality and imperishability of Ameretat. Ameretat is the seventh and final manifestation of Ahura Mazda in the Gathas. This manifestation, meaning and concept of immortality and deathlessness, represents another attribute and characteristic of the ideal sovereign in Iranian political thought in the Gathas. Ameretat, as the final manifestation of Ahura Mazda in the Gathas, has both a horizontal and a vertical relationship with the preceding manifestations, meaning it appears alongside them as a manifestation and is also considered the final stage vertically (hierarchically). Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom) manifests Vohu Manah (Good Thought), then Asha (Truth = Cosmic Order) alongside and with Good Thought leads to Khshathra (Ideal Sovereign – Ideal Land). Then Spenta Armaiti, as the first feminine manifestation, manifests in the form of humility, patience, and tolerance of the ideal sovereign. Haurvatat, another feminine manifestation, carries wholeness and perfection, culminating in Ameretat. Ameretat is the immortality and imperishability of Ahura Mazda, which finds meaning and concept for the ideal sovereign, the agent and representative of Ahura Mazda, in the sense of 'good name/fame'. When the ideal sovereign attains the station of immortality, it is within the station of the Lord whose entire being is integrated with wisdom and good thought.

### **Conclusion**

To examine the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas, utilizing Schleiermacher's "hermeneutic circle" methodology, we first provided an introduction to the pre-Zoroastrian period as an entry point. Then, the theology, ontology, and anthropology presented in the Gathas were explained as a whole based on Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle. Subsequently, the seven components of Ahura

Mazda's power, i.e., His manifestations, were explained as parts, along with their relationship and proportion to the whole text. Wisdom in the Gathas is considered the main foundation of politics, as it is one with the existence of the Great God (Ahura Mazda). Ahura Mazda, as the Wise God, is responsible for the order of the entire universe and is at the head of existence as the sovereign of the spiritual and material worlds. In the Gathas, Ahura Mazda has seven manifestations named Spenta Mainyu, Vohu Manah, Asha, Khshathra, Spenta Armaiti, Haurvatat, and Ameretat. These seven manifestations subsist in Him, and their relationship to Ahura Mazda is like the relationship of the sun to its rays. Each of these seven manifestations expresses a part of the wisdom of the Wise God and reveals specific attributes of Ahura Mazda. In other words, each of these manifestations had a valuable and fundamental function and necessity in administering the spiritual and material worlds. The relationship among the manifestations of Ahura Mazda is expressed both horizontally and vertically in the Gathas, meaning they are mentioned alongside each other and each is a prerequisite for the other. From the infinite wisdom of Ahura Mazda, Spenta Mainyu (Holy Wisdom) is manifested. Vohu Manah, as the first creation meaning Good Thought or Good Wisdom, leads to Asha, and from this Asha emerges the ideal sovereign (Khshathra). Then Spenta Armaiti (meaning forbearance/patience) and Haurvatat (meaning wholeness/perfection) culminate in Ameretat (meaning immortality). Each expresses part of the attributes and characteristics of Ahura Mazda, and in historical periods, they are considered attributes and characteristics of the ideal sovereign. In the Gathas, there exists a tent-like image—an image viewing the sky, humanity, and the earth as interconnected and continuous; any rupture or disharmony is imagined as chaos and disorder. Just as the cosmic realm is depicted tent-like, political thought also follows the hierarchy existing in the relationship of the Mazdean manifestations. Political thought in the Gathas and the relationship between wisdom and politics are influenced by Zarathustra's creative innovations in the Gathas. The emergence of Zarathustra and the propagation and explanation of doctrines such as monotheism, the tendency to concentrate power in a single God, the cosmic struggle between good and evil, and the

introduction of cosmic order brought profound changes in the theoretical foundations of political thought. Wisdom in the Gathas has a religious nature and falls under the ontology of Zoroastrianism; therefore, it can be said that wisdom plays a determining role in politics, statesmanship, and political thought. Desirable politics in Zarathustra's thought is wise, ethics-oriented, and even participatory. Analyzing and examining the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas clarifies that Zarathustra considers wisdom not only a tool for knowledge but also the foundation of legitimate power. Politics in the Gathas is founded upon truth (Asha), freedom of choice, and social responsibility. The ideal sovereign is one who guides people towards truth with wisdom. The model of the relationship between wisdom and politics in the Gathas, as an ideal and perfect model in historical periods, has been the theoretical foundation of political thought. The manifestations of Ahura Mazda in historical periods, known as the Amesha Spentas (Immortal Holy Ones), each constitute part of the attributes and characteristics of the ideal sovereign. This research can serve as a basis for studies examining political thought and the relationship between wisdom and politics in the historical periods of ancient Iran.

## References

- Ashtiani, Jalal al-Din. (1995/1374). *Zarathustra, Mazdayasna, and Government*. Tehran: Sherkat-e Sahami-ye Entesharat.
- Amouzgar, Zhaleh. (2012/1391). *Mythological History of Iran*. Tehran: SAMT Publications.
- Oshidari, Jahangir. (2007/1386). *Encyclopedia of Mazdayasna*. Tehran: Markaz Publications.
- Boyce, Mary. (1997/1376). *A History of Zoroastrianism, Vol. 1*. Trans. Homayoun San'atizadeh. Tehran: Toos Publications.
- Boyce, Mary. (1995/1374). *A History of Zoroastrianism, Vol. 1*. Trans. Homayoun San'atizadeh. Tehran: Toos Publications.
- Boyce, Mary et al. (2009/1388). *Essays on Zoroastrian Philosophy: Collected Articles*. Trans. Saeed Zare' et al. Qom: University of Religions and Denominations Press.
- Bahār, Mehrdad. (2001/1380). *Asian Religions*. Ed. Abolghasem Esmailpour. Tehran: Cheshmeh Publications.
- Bahār, Mehrdad. (2008/1387). *From Myth to History*. Tehran: Cheshmeh Publications.
- Bahār, Mehrdad. (2010/1389). *A Research on Iranian Myths, Part One and Part Two*. Tehran: Agah Publications.
- Biruni, Abu Rayhan. (1973/1352). *Al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah (Chronology of Ancient Nations)*. Trans. Akbar Danaseresht Seyrafi. Tehran: Khayyam Library.
- Pourdavoud, Ebrahim. (1947/1326). *Culture of Ancient Iran*. Tehran: Pakatchi Publications.
- Pourdavoud, Ebrahim. (1999/1378). *The Gathas*. Tehran: Asatir Publications.
- Pourdavoud, Ebrahim. (2002/1381). *Notes on the Gathas*. Tehran: Asatir Publications.
- Payadeh Koohsar, Abolghasem. (2007/1386). "A Comparative Study of 'Rita' and 'Asha' in Ancient India and Iran." *Journal of Religious Studies (Pazhouhesh Nameh-ye Adyan)*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 59-90.
- Tafazzoli, Ahmad, & Amouzgar, Zhaleh. (2004/1383). *History of Pre-Islamic Religions*. Tehran: Sokhan Publications.
- Towfiqi, Hossein. (2002/1381). *Introduction to Major Religions*. Tehran: SAMT Publications.

- Chavosh Akbari, Rahim. (2004/1383). *The Ahuric Epic in the Gathas*. Tehran: Office of Cultural Research Publications.
- Doustkhah, Jalil. (2003/1382). *The Avesta: The Oldest Poems of Iranians*, Vol. 1. Tehran: Morvarid Publications.
- Daylam Salehi, Behrouz. (2005/1384). *From Political Order to Cosmic Order*. Tehran: Baz Publications.
- Dadagi, Farnbagh. (1990/1369). *Bundahishn*. Ed. Mehrdad Bahār. Tehran: Toos Publications.
- Rashed Mohassel, Mohammad Taghi. (2006/1385). *Wizidagihā-i Zādspram (Selections of Zadspram)*. Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.
- Rezaei, Abdolazim. (2009/1388). *Lineage and Religions of Ancient Iran*. Tehran: Dor Publications.
- Rezaei, Abdolazim. (2002/1381). *History of Iranian Civilization and Culture*. Tehran: Dor Publications.
- Razi, Hashem. (1988/1367). *Dictionary of Avestan Proper Names*. Tehran: Forouhar Publications.
- Dumezil, Georges. (2016/1395). *Myth and Mythology*. Trans. Bahman Namvar Motlagh & Behrouz Avazpour. Tehran: Mugham Publications.
- Sakhai, Mojgan. (2003/1382). "The Doctrine of Monotheism in Zoroastrianism." *Minavi Hekmat Journal*, Year 7, No. 23, Dec-Jan, pp. 130-152.
- Sasanfar, Abtin. (2011/1390). *The Gathas: Hymns of Asho Zarathustra*. Tehran: Behesht Publications.
- Soroushparvar, Pedaram. (2016/1395). "The Zoroastrian Saviour: An Examination of the Concept of Saoshyant in the Gathas Holy Book." *Scientific-Specialized Quarterly of Mahdavi Researches*, Year 5, No. 19.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. (2023/1402). *\*Hermeneutics (Manuscripts from 1809-1819)\**. Trans. Mohammad Ebrahim Baset. Tehran: Ney Publications.
- Corbin, Henry. (2008/1387). *Earthly Celestial Kingdom: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran (The Human Body on the Day of Resurrection)*. Trans. Zia al-Din Dehshiri. Tehran: Tahouri Publications.
- Christensen, Arthur. (2009/1388). *Iran during the Sasanian Era*. Trans. Rashid Yasemi. Tehran: Rasti-e No Publications.

- Moradi Ghiasabadi, Reza. (2013/1392). *Zarathustra's Gathas (Text of the Gathas based on the report of Prades Octor Sherwoo)*. With the assistance of Babak Salehyan. Tehran: Iranian Research Publications.
- Mahmoudabadi, Seyyed Asghar, & Abolghasemi, Mohsen. (2009/1388). "The Function of Fire in Iranian Mythology." *Journal of History (Tarikh)*, No. 5/63, Winter, pp. [Please check pagination].
- Mahmoudi, Abolfazl, & Mirzapour Al-Hashem, Seddiqeh. (2020/1399). "Asha in Avestan Texts: Ontological Researches." *Biannual Scientific Journal*, Year 9, No. 17, Spring-Summer, pp. 171-195.
- Mahmoudizadeh Dehbarzi, Mahmoudreza. (2017/1396). *The Principles of Kingship in the Gathas of Zarathustra*. Qom: Mofid University Press.
- Moftouni, Nadia, & Doroudi Javan, Morteza. (2018/1397). "Sources of Bahman's Thought or the First Emanation of Sheikh Ishraq." *Journal of History of Philosophy (Tarikh-e Falsafeh)*, Year 9, No. 3, Winter, pp. 7-24.
- Mackenzie, David Neil. (2000/1379). *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*. Trans. Mahshid Mirfakhraei. Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.
- Movahedian Attar, Ali, et al. (2014/1393). *Typology of Saviour Thought in Religions*. Qom: University of Religions and Denominations Press.
- Mehr, Farhang. (2008/1387). *A New Look at an Ancient Religion*. Tehran: Jami Publications.
- Milton, John. (2003/1382). *Paradise Lost*. Trans. Shoja' al-Din Shafa. Tehran: Nakhustin Publications.
- Nyberg, Samuel Henrik. (1976/1355). *Religions of Ancient Iran*. Trans. Seif al-Din Najmabadi. Tehran: Iranian Centre for the Study of Cultures.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. (2017/1396). *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*. Trans. Saeed Firoozabadi. Tehran: Jami Publications.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. (2003/1382). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. Trans. Dariush Ashouri. Tehran: Agah Publications.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, et al. (2000/1379). *Modern Hermeneutics*. Trans. Babak Ahmadi et al. Tehran: Markaz Publications.
- Veronica, Ions. (1994/1373). *Indian Mythology*. Trans. Mohammad Hossein Bajlan Farrokhi. Tehran: Asatir Publications.
- Hinnells, John. (2010/1389). *Persian Mythology*. Trans. Zhaleh Amouzgar & Ahmad Tafazzoli. Tehran: Cheshmeh Publications.