

# THE MEANING OF MAZDA AND AHURA IN THE GATHA

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The Gathas are no dogmatic handbook but a work of religious poetry which, to a large extent, is of esoteric nature. In composing them, Zarathushtra followed a considerable number of rules of composition and rhythm, which were forgotten at the time of the Pahlavi translation and, therefore, have been left unnoticed by the Gatha scholars of our time.

One basic rule is that two members of the name of God (*Ahura Mazda* 'Wise Lord') can be inverted (*Mazda Ahura*) and that *Ahura* and *Mazda* (or *Mazda* and *Ahura*) can also stand separated from each other. In such cases the second of the two most times has appositional function (e.g. 'the Lord,... the Wise One' or 'the Wise One, ... the Lord'), yet also predicative function is possible (e.g. "the Lord... (is) wise ..or 'wise .. (is) the Lord'). As it is most clearly seen in Yasna 44, *Ahura* and *Mazda* can even be placed in two different sentences of the one and the same stanza, but in no stanza one of the two can stand more than one time.

The distribution of the two members is not only governed by the compositional and metrical but also by the rhythmical considerations: The word *Mazda Ahura* (3+4 syllables). In Yasna 28 the member *Ahura* is preferably placed before the caesura or at the end of the line (see 28,3.4.5.6.9.10.11 vs. 28.8). This observation also applies to 28.9 where the caesura separates *Ahura* from *Mazda*, which means that this instance of the name of God is not necessarily an exact pre-form of the Old Persian *A<h>uramazda* and Pahlavi *Ohrmazd*, pointing to the rendering 'O Ahura, O Mazda' rather than 'O Ahura Mazda'.

[ The above is the kind reply of Professor Dr. Helmut Humbach to our question about the meaning of Mazda and Ahura in the Gathas and in particular Yasna 28.]