

## Heaven and Hell, and Reincarnation

*Ali A. Jafarey*

Zarathushtra speaks very little about a world from which no one has returned to tell us the tale. He neither indulges in, nor thrives on speculation, but on conclusions from what one discovers and understands. He mentions certain terms, which give one an idea of a higher and more sublime mental life. They are the “House of Song,” “House of Good Mind,” and the “Eternal Best Existence of Good Mind.” Only once, he uses the term “future existence.” It is where one lives with God. The language is such that one understands that such a sublime state is both mental and physical in this world, but only mental in the life beyond when the soul attains its progressive perfection and immortality.<sup>1</sup>

But if a person lives a life of “harmful wrong” in a human society, promotes an evil and deceitful government, sows seeds of discord among people, disregards social rules and regulations, and takes pleasure in harming the living world around, he/she suffers the consequences of his/her actions and teachings, and remains in the “House of Wrong.” He singles out bad rulers and evil priests as the foremost among such persons. Another term for this is the “House of the Worst Mind.” The soul of a wrongful person returns from the “sorting bridge” back into the world of wrong. This metaphoric bridge separates the righteous from the wrongful. The righteous progress but the wrongful remain in the world to perfect themselves. Does this mean reincarnation or that the soul lingers on without a physical body until it is perfected? Perhaps, but only a thought-provoking hint without any speculations whatsoever.<sup>(2)</sup>

This does not mean that there is no salvation for the wrongful. Their souls suffer the consequences of their words and deeds until they realize the divine truth and choose to turn righteous, and work for their own perfection and immortality. To sum up, the pristine doctrine of Zarathushtra’s “heaven and hell” is more of a mental bliss and woe than two physical places reserved for ultimate sensual enjoyment or physical torment.

The resurrection with all its details of how the dead would rise for the final judgment is again absent in the Gathas. The consequences of peoples’ words and deeds in this world and the progress toward perfection and immortality are a continuous process. There are no pauses, no waiting. God’s creation moves forward and we, souls and bodies, are a part of it.<sup>(3)</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Songs: 5:13, 15; 10:7-8; 11:11; 14:11; 16:6, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Songs: 3:8, 10; 4:1; 6:4; 9:14; 13:1.