

Basic Reflections on the Ideal Society (Vohu-Khshathra) of Zarathushtra

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Abstract. This article is composed by basic reflections on the Ideal Society (Vohu-Khshathra) of Zarathushtra. Here the concept of Vohu-Khshathra is briefly studied, analyzed and related to the primal principles of life that appear in the Gathas of Zarathushtra, the first ethical proposal in the history of humankind.

Keywords. Ideal Society, Vohu-Khshathra, Zarathushtra, Gathas, Primal Principles of Life.

Introduction

This article is a call to take some time to evaluate our thoughts, words and actions. We are the creators of society and the materials for our creation are thoughts, words and actions. We have the opportunity to co-work with Nature in creation and in maintaining creation in harmony. However, a person can have good thoughts, good words and good actions limited to him/herself and his/her family, but this would be a limited vision. It is not the complete vision that Zarathushtra promoted. It would be like making a single step in a long journey. Sometime should be taken to evaluate sincerely what we have done for other people outside our individual and family boundaries.

The concept of Vohu-Khshathra

Zarathushtra brought us the concept of Vohu-Khshathra, which can be rendered as "Ideal Society", he gave importance to this primal principle of life because the individual happiness is not apart from collective happiness. In this sense, Zarathushtra has proposed a project which involves the construction of a society where happiness must be achieved completely by each one of its members, not only is happiness reserve for a few minority. The House of Song has infinite rooms to accommodate His guests. In the Gathas, the first book of ethics, Zarathushtra is just asking for volunteers to help him bring these guests.

It is interesting to acknowledge that the concept of Vohu-Khshathra is related to the concept of sustainability, which is the endurance of systems and processes. The organizing principle for sustainability is sustainable development, which includes the four interconnected domains: ecology, economics, politics and culture [1].

Vohu-Khshathra like sustainability faces a social challenge that entails international and national law, urban planning and transport, local and individual lifestyles and ethical consumerism. Ways of living more sustainably can take many forms from reorganizing living conditions (e.g., ecovillages, eco-municipalities and sustainable cities), reappraising economic sectors (permaculture, green building, sustainable agriculture), or work practices (sustainable architecture), using science to develop new technologies (green technologies, renewable energy and sustainable fission and fusion power), or designing systems in a flexible and reversible manner, and adjusting individual lifestyles that conserve natural resources [1,2,3,4].

The best way to evaluate our performance as co-workers of Nature is measuring our contributions to build a better society. But what are the parameters? What are the instruments to measure our contribution? If someone has fever, a thermometer can be used. The speed of a car can be visualized looking at the speedometer, and so on.

Well, society also has parameters to measure its health conditions. Some of these parameters are related to poverty, starvation, epidemical diseases, lack of educational opportunities, unemployment, violence of any type, corruption, criminality, discrimination, etc. These elements cause fever and make our society sick.

The time is appropriate to evaluate if we have voluntarily done this year something to contribute in the making of a better society. Have we done anything to reduce poverty in this world? Or to fight the devil of starvation...or to provide an educational opportunity to the needed...

Let's see what Zarathushtra said about Vohu-Khshathra in the Gathas:

"It is the best dividend...." and..."It is for Vohu-Khshathra that I am working for all of us (Song 16.1)

"Where does felicity flow?"...Through Vohu-Khshathra Wise One... (Song 16.4).

The happiness promoted by Zarathushtra was not only individual, it was collective. Thus, the time has come to evaluate our participation in the promotion of Ushta for the community. It is the right time to remember the clear statement of Zarathushtra as he said:

"But if an able person does not come to help, he shall himself fall into the binding trap of wrong" (Song 11.6).

If we fail to pass this self-evaluation, there is still time to do some work oriented to strengthen our participation in the building of a better society next year and other years to come. The idea is not to develop a feeling of guilt, the purpose is to instruct ourselves about the social responsibility that we have in rehabilitating the world in which we inhabit.

It is necessary to re-program our Vohu-Khshathra mission on the Path to Radiant Happiness and Gathic Prosperity.

Vohu-Khshathra in the Gathas

Vohu-Khshathra, the "Ideal Society" is a primal principle of life [5]. The Gathas, Our Guide., however, this gathic dimension is not isolated nor independent of other principles of life proclaimed by Zarathushtra: Vohumanah, Asha, Aramaity, Seraosha, Spenta Mainyu and Ameretat. All of these principles are intimately related.

Vohumanah and Vohu-Khshathra

Vohu-Khshathra depends on the unification of every individual's Good Mind (Vohu-Manah) into a collective Good Mind. A collective Good Mind means that all of the individuals are willing to share their ethical values to pursue a collective well-being and social justice. The opinion of Zarathushtra regarding a direct relation between Good Mind and Vohu-Khshathra is obvious:

"...I seek through my best mind the powerful Vohu-Khshathra for my people, so that We may overcome wrong by promoting it (the ideal society)" (Song 4.4).

"... Vohu-Khshathra increases through Good Mind" (Song 4.6).

Asha and Vohu-Khshathra

The law of Asha provides the normative, the order and the means by which the individual and the society should perform their actions to accomplish the right goals.

To build an ideal society, it is necessary "To do the right things, at the right times, in the right places in order to obtain the right results that consequently would lead to a healthy society", and here lies the relation with Asha, the law of precision.

Zarathushtra explained this relation in his message: "...The person who promotes Asha (Righteousness) with his intellect, words, deeds and conscience...God grants him Vohu-Khshathra..." (Song 16.21)

Aramaity and Vohu-Khshathra

Aramaity, which is rendered as serenity, is a condition that is needed to guarantee an environment of tranquility and peace. It is an element, a state of mind that at the collective level is achieved by the understanding and tolerance of the individual members. There might not be agreement on certain important issues, but there is always an open door for healthy, non-violent discussions. A scenario of Aramaity brings an opportunity for the individuals and their diversities to work together in the achievement of the great vital goals.

There is hard evidence in the Gathas about this important connection: "Serenity promotes the unconquerable Vohu-Khshathra" (Song 1.3).

Seraosha and Vohu-Khshathra

Seraosha is an attribute that allows "to listen to the divine voice". This is an individual as much as a collective attribute. As a collective entity, the individuals can get together in order to establish a connection with God. This is suggested by Zarathushtra when he says: "Let those, who have joined You in action, assemble to hear You ..." (Song 16.3).

Spenta Mainyu and Vohu-Khshathra

Spenta Mainyu, which has been translated from the Avestan as "Progressive Mentality", is also synonymous of progress. Spenta Mainyu, in the right perspective, provides the engine that keeps moving society toward new inventions, new ways of curing diseases, better ways of mass communication and transportation. It gives society the attributes of dynamism, progressive action and evolution. It also has the power to maintain the social achievements in complete harmony.

Following is the relation between Spenta Mainyu and Vohu-Khshathra, as suggested by Zoroaster:

"To him who, through progressive mentality performs his duties best in thoughts, words, and deeds in accordance with righteousness, the Wise One grants wholeness and immortality through Vohu-Khshathra" (Song 12.1).

Haurvatat and Vohu-Khshathra

Considering Haurvatat as "Perfection". From a social perspective, it would be the perfecting process by which undergoes the collective of the people. It is the result of a collective, material and spiritual, process of evolution that implies the effect of all of the individuals' Good Minds (Vohumanah), Collective Respect to Righteousness (Asha), Collective Mental State of Serenity (Aramaity), Collective Communion with the Divine (Seraosha), motorized by the energy of a collective Progressive Mind (Spenta Mainyu). Thus, Haurvatat, is the process, as a whole, that leads the people to an ideal society.

In figure 1, there is an attempt to explain how the Primal Principles of Life in a collective manner interact to provide the foundations for Vohu-Khshathra.

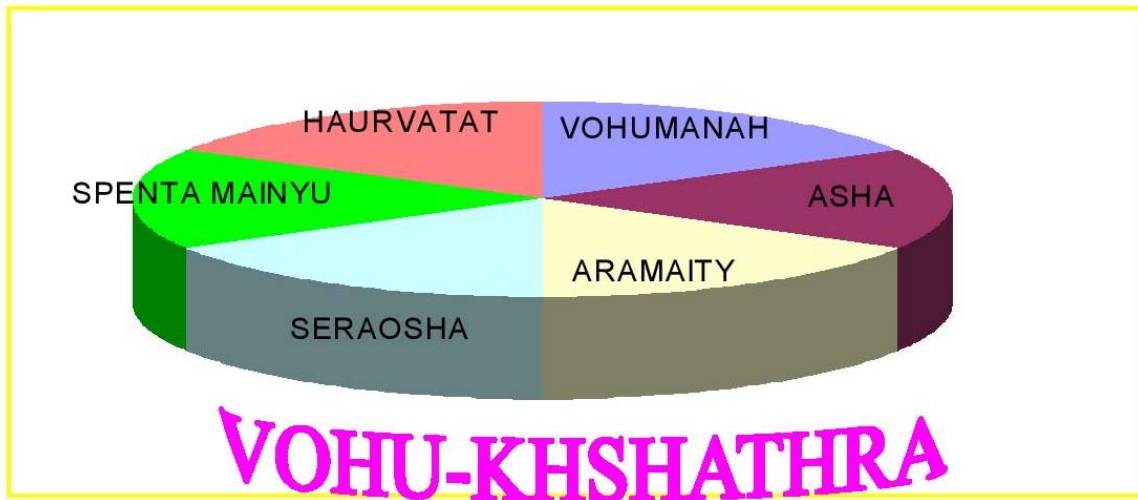


Figure 1. Collective Primal Principles of Life that integrate Vohu-Khshathra.

The Primal Principles of Life are shown by Zarathushtra, in such a way that it is fundamental to learn that each individual is part of an Universal System (the living world?...), in which he/she is expected to participate to accomplish collective goals for the sake of an Universal Balance.

Let us remember the words of Zarathushtra: "It is Wise One, Vohu-Khshathra, that provides an honest-living oppressed a better living" (Song 17.9).

Now, let us ask ourselves:

What have I done to provide the oppressed people with a better living? ... And what will I do in the future? ...

If the answers are a negative, then one needs to do serious reflections about the real meaning of life.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Vohu-Khshathra has been defined as the "Ideal Society". Zarathushtra expressed his concern about this important issue. He assured with his own words: "...He who does not strengthen it (Vohu-Khshathra), shall get much bad at the turning point of his life" (Song 16.6).

A logical question can be brought up in this instance: Where is that turning point of life mentioned by Zoroaster? ...Well, according to the gathic teachings, this event could occur at the Sorting Bridge. This again is supported by Zoroaster: "...His soul openly upbraids him in front of the sorting bridge, because it is his deeds and words that make him lose the path of asha" (Song 16.13).

That can be the time for the final evaluation of our actions on the Path to the House of Song. Here the importance of the concept of Vohu-Khshathra can be perceived totally, because there is not more powerful evidence of our Good Mind and our respect to Asha than our participation in the design and construction of an ideal society.

The message is simple: "We have a social duty". As Zoroastrian we have to become leaders in the promotion of Social Justice, in healing society from poverty, intellectual as well as economical.

The concept of Vohu-Khshathra comprises three levels: the individual, the family and the society as a whole. The individual has to use his/her attributes of Good Mind and knowledge of the laws of Asha, to integrate a family with a sense of mission to build a better and ideal society. In figure 2, the individual and the family are integrated to conform the ideal society. In a way, the circle of Vohu-Khshathra is completed and the ethical values at the individual, family and social levels are harmonious. This is a society that mainly contains elements of peace, love, democracy, progress and unity.

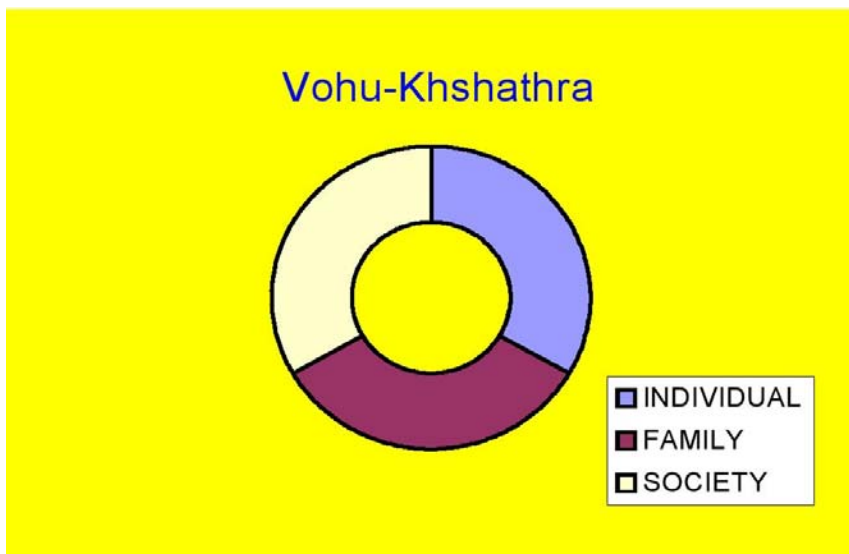


Figure 2. The Ideal Society

On the other hand, not building the ideal society means the presence of a sick society. This is caused because the individual is not attuned with the sense of Vohu-Khshathra, he/she is inhabiting his/her own little world, divorced from the "Precious Plan for Good Conscience" (Song 16.17) and as a consequence from the universe. He/She ignores the powerful law of Asha and the mission of Vohu-Khshathra. An individual under these conditions will promote an unhappy family without a vision of spiritual progress and this finally will have a negative impact on society. In the worse cases, this tremendous negative perspective will be the cause of poverty and wars.

In figure 3, the lack of connection among the three levels that compose an ideal society can be observed. Individual, family and society are in different directions in an unharmonious environment. Our individual and group actions should be focused to illuminate the social environment where we live. Other religions clearly specify the economical contributions that their followers must give, sometimes they even specify the percentage of their incomes that have to be donated for the mission. Although this level of detail does not appear to be in the Gathas, more than any other doctrines, Zarathushtra calls for a complete participation in rehabilitating society. The more we give of our efforts to the Vohu-Khshathra mission, the better we will be rewarded by Ahura Mazda, because in Vohu-Khshathra is the place where our actions converge.

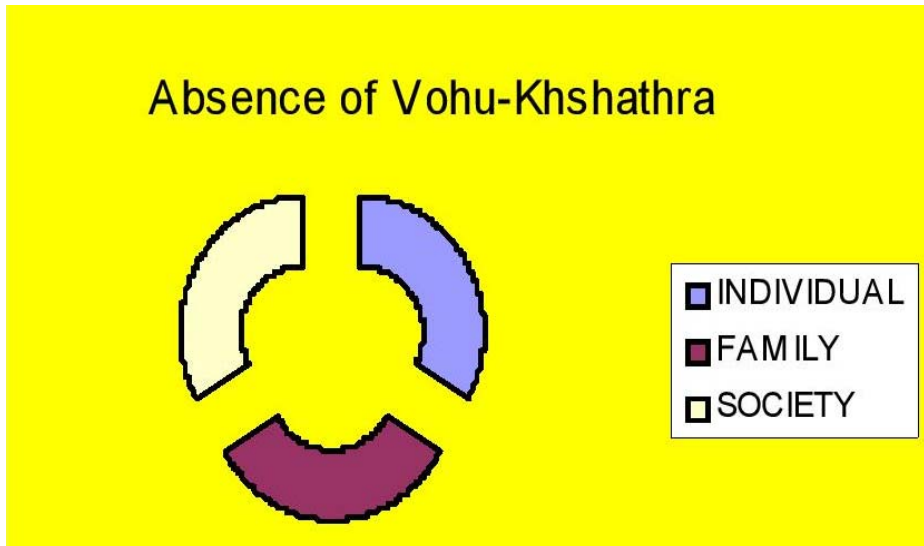


Figure 3. Absence of Vohu-Khshathra

In Vohu-Khshathra is where children should be educated to have the opportunity to play and enjoy a healthy childhood. In Vohu-Khshathra resides the respect for the elder and old people can spent a happy retirement. In Vohu-Khshathra prevails good mind and peace, with no chance of wars.

Let's hear the call of Zarathushtra and let's awaken to our Vohu-Khshathra mission until we reach the Sorting Bridge...

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