

**THE GĀTHAS OF ZARATHUSHTRA  
(ZOROASTER) IN METRE AND  
RHYTHM: BEING A SECOND EDITION  
OF THE METRICAL VERSIONS IN THE  
AUTHOR'S EDITION OF 1892-94**

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The Gâthas of Zarathushtra (Zoroaster) in metre and rhythm: being a second edition of the metrical versions in the author's edition of 1892-94 by Lawrence H. Mills

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**LAWRENCE H. MILLS**

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(ZOROASTER) IN METRE AND  
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# The Gâthas

of

Zarathushtra (Zoroaster)

in metre and rhythm,

being

a

second edition

of the

metrical versions in the author's edition of 1892—94,

to which is added

a second edition (now in English) of the author's Latin version also of 1892—94, in the Five Zarathushtrian Gâthas, which was subventioned by His Lordship, the Secretary of State for India in Council, and also by the Trustees of the Sir J. Jejeebhoy Translation Fund of Bombay, and is now practically disposed of; (see also the literary translation in the Sacred Books of the East, XXX, pp. 1—393 (1887), itself founded by especial request upon the limited edition of 1883)

by

**Lawrence H. Mills**, D.D., Hon. M. A.,  
Professor of Zend Philology in the University of Oxford.

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to be had of

F. A. BROCKHAUS, LEIPZIG.

1900.

Dedicated to the memory

of

Bai Dinbai Nesserwanji Manockji Petit,

late of

**Bombay,**

a generous contributor to the endowment of the Professorship of  
Zend Philology in the University of Oxford.



## Preface and Introduction.

After all that I have written on this subject I will not waste many words upon a preface here. My object now is to reach a wider circle of intellectual readers, who may not, however, yet have become habituated to oriental literature.

I by no means wish to minimise the difficulties of Zoroastrian science, though I present its interior in this popular manner. The questions which arise are exceedingly numerous and the problems are severe. Some of them are also not susceptible of (a positive) solution, while the materials necessary to a critical opinion have actually never been at all attempted in any serious spirit by any person whomsoever (since Spiegel) except to the extent of the Gâthas; and the urgent requests which I have received for assistance from leading scholars have been based upon the exhaustive presentation of these materials made in my Study of them<sup>1</sup>.

As this Preface may be read by persons who hear for the first time of the subject I give a further account of my stewardship. Aside from the more extended attempts (S. B. E. XXXI, 1887, Gâthas with Zend, Pahlavi, Sanskrit and Persian texts with Latin verbatims of the Zend, English of the Pahlavi and Sanskrit, together with Commentary 1892—94, (Dictionary now in the Press), other contributions to the subject have been very numerous, though each separate section of them has not extended beyond the

<sup>1</sup> See the Five Zarathushtrian Gâthas.

It is easy enough with absolutely no (enlightened) public to criticise us, to offer tentative translation where others have preceded us; but to afford really exhaustive and not fictitious results on matters never yet even properly edited is quite another thing.



dimensions of a magazine article (see Roth's Festgrüss, Yasna 28, in the sister tongue Sanskrit, Acts of the Congress of Orientalists at London in 1892, and at Paris in 1897 'The Sanskrit Equivalents of Yasna 44', (things of the utmost practical use), articles in the Zeitschrift of the German Oriental Society, in the American Journal of Philology, Journal of the American Oriental Society, of the Royal Asiatic Society, in the Critical Review, the Nineteenth Century Review, the Thinker, the Asiatic Quarterly Review, etc., etc. with dates spread over the last twelve years). But there seems to be no end to the questions involved, and masses of MSS. still remain awaiting space for printing or time for re-copying. No, I do not wish to minimise the difficulties as I am myself the chief sufferer from them.

But in the meantime, a free rendering as a temporary help is an absolute necessity if we are ever to get them (more popularly) read. Professors and leading scholars expressed themselves as pleased with my translations in the XXXIst volume of the Sacred Books of the East (1887); others however found them too roughly literal. (One of my pupils used to say that he could read the Gâthas using them almost without a lexicon). But the penalty was a somewhat uncouth diction. I cannot of course attempt to remedy that defect here; that edition was the only literary one which I could offer then; and for such a series as the Sacred Books of the East I should not even now venture on rounding off the asperities.

Notwithstanding a too little attractive exterior it was as Darmesteter wrote me (for I then dared not look myself 'déjà cité et apprécié par tous les spécialistes' which was enough surely. And the chief fault which I find with it now is that it is at present some twelve years older than when it left its author's hand<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> It was the report of a good bit of a lifetime's labour. (I apologise for much of the personal tone here; it has been elicited by the ingratitude of a pupil, and of some so-called old friends who are greatly in my debt).

It was one of the most exhaustively 'prepared' books that ever left a press; see its preface and that of the Gāthas 1892-1894. The present attempt is a mere second edition of the metrical version which appeared opposite the Latin word-for-word's in those Five Zarathushtrian Gāthas, (which are now practically all disposed of<sup>1</sup>). But as before, I by no means allow the free metrical to go out unguarded by a word-for-word. Even disinterested friends may in all good faith wish to know whether these striking thoughts<sup>2</sup> in the metrical can be justified by the actual words of their original, and they will see that I have done all that I could do to satisfy them. And on the other hand the usual groups of mendacious malignants will find it more difficult to mislead the public. If the word-for-word's are given here as well as in the Five Zarathushtrian Gāthas no one can assail the freedom.

Departing from custom, I put this verbatim now into English, translating and modifying it from my Latin in the larger book<sup>3</sup>. Readers in India are more familiar with Sanskrit than with Latin and with English than with either; here they can read the actual terms with extensions and comments separated by brackets. I think the subject is worth the trouble which I have bestowed upon it. Said the Rev. James Hope Moulton, in the Critical Review: 'The Gāthas or Hymns of Zoroaster are by far the most precious relic which we possess of oriental religion, the only sacred literature which in dignity, in profoundness, in purity of thought and absolute freedom from unworthy conceptions of the divine could for a moment be compared with the Hebrew scriptures' (jan. '96).

<sup>1</sup> I am generously offered another subvention from the British Government toward a second edition.

<sup>2</sup> Most striking in view of their age and circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> It is therefore practically a new edition of that rendering, but I could hardly repeat here all the rich alternatives there presented, which together with those in the Commentary (pp. 393-623 and the Dictionary still in press) include pretty nearly all conceivable opinions and possibilities.

Mr. Gladstone also mentioned in a private letter of October '91: 'I am sensible of the extraordinary interest attaching to Zoroastrianism, and grateful to those who . . . afford us such help in understanding it'. With regard to my critical editions, see below, note I, page IX. It is to be hoped that the public which I am endeavouring now to teach will not need to be informed that the rare value of these hymns arises from their importance in the history of thought and sentiment.

If these pieces were indeed written yesterday they could not be considered contemptible, but they are to be valued chiefly for their rarity as the expression of religious sentiments at their early date, (as to which see S. B. E. XXXI, Introduction p. XXXIII—VII), and as a specimen of the force of human thought in its influence upon the then coming future.

If we have any respect for the religious ideas of the world and their growth, here are some of their mothers. Not that our own personal feelings are direct descendants from the sentiments expressed in these immortal fragments, but that they are most certainly the descendants of ideas that were cognate to them.

It is needless to say more to those whom I hope will read this book. To the multitude who could mention the inferiority of these pieces to modern productions, I have nothing whatever to say (*turpe pecus*), except perhaps that there is a very large mass of modern anthology of which what they affirm could by no means be maintained.

With regard to the other works I would add one word as to the matter of their dates for those who are not in the 'swim of it'. I would recall that they were begun so long ago as even 1881 when I had already tentatively printed some 390 odd pages of my Gâthas (all the texts Zend, Pahlavi, Sanskrit and Persian with translation of the first three). These were imperatively demanded of me by the Pythagoras of Aryan orientalism, the sage of Tuebingen whose 'ipse dixit' could make or unmake a reputation.