

The much-revered domestic Rooster

[Pronunciation symbols:

a as in **fun**; ā as in **far**; ə as in **fed**, ē as in **fade**; i as in **fill**; ī as in **feel**; o as in **for**; ō as in **fore**;
u as in **full**; ū as in **fool**. The nasal sounds are **an** as in **āvan**; **ən** as in the French ‘**tres bien**’,
īn as in **Ahīnsā** (also pronounced ‘**īm**’ as in Sanskrit **Ahīmsā** as also in Avestan and
Gathic languages) and **ūn** as in **Humāyūn**]

Zarathushtis on the Subcontinent adhere strictly to the Gujarati adage "**Marghō kabi nahi kāpvō**" (**A rooster must never be sacrificed for food**). Not surprisingly, with chicken being among one of their many Z-culinary delights - '*marghi nā fārchā*' (marinated/battered fried portions of hen), '*marghi nō pulāv*' (saffron-flavoured spiced rice with pieces of hen), etc this point had to be emphasised. When it comes to sacrifice for food it has to be *always a 'marghi' (hen), never a 'marghō' (rooster)*. This intense respect shown to the Domestic Rooster dates back to Gathic/Avestan times when the early morning crowing by the Domestic Rooster preceded the twilight glow of Dawn and assisted the homestead to wake up and rise to begin the new day's activities in earnest.

Such is the devotion with which we show admiration to the Rooster that there has been an oft quoted metaphoric complaint (in defence) in Gujarati "**Māhri pāsēy marghō kapāviō**" (**I was lured into sacrificing the rooster**), meaning, regretfully, '**I was tricked into doing the wrong thing against my wish**') when one is 'reluctantly obligated into doing any generally forbidden and unpleasant task'.

The recitation of Ushā Bāmi (**Hōshbām**) at the period of time nearing dawn, between the end of **Ushāhin Gāh** and the glow of dawn just preceding sunrise (which is the beginning of the Avestan new day), is a very tranquil pious presentation during the early soothing hours of the morning. In our scriptures **the divinity Ushā, personifying the glory of Dawn**, is the Yazata of positivism, glowing optimism and hope. Ushā heeds the voice of every worshipper. Ushā is held in such high esteem, that, even Zarathushtra reveres Ushā in: -

Gāthā Ushtavaiti; Yasna 44, verse 5:

*“This do I ask thee, tell me truly O Ahurā.
Which architect did fashion both light and darkness?
Who was the wise one who planned both sleep and awakening?
Who did create Dawn, Day and Night - as if to inculcate wisdom and purpose in life?”*

Note (in this verse compared to the next) how Zarathushtra places Dawn first, which heralds the day, which in turn is followed by night. With the emergence of dawn, he also correlates early awakening with wisdom.

Gāthā Spəntā Mainyu; Yasna 50, verse 10:

While talking of the present and past good deeds Zarathushtra says:

*“They are as worthy as thy shining glory just like the Sun's rays
and the blushing Dawn (Ushā aēurush)”.*

Note how Zarathushtra hints on the pinkish colourful aura of Dawn to describe Ushā - bashful, shy, and blushing as she is pursued by her consort, the Sun and as both emerge from the darkness. Here, note also that although the Dawn emerges first, the Sun (as the groom) is mentioned first and then the bride - perhaps, in the proper norms of the time.

The domestic Rooster:

Called '**Parō-dars**' in Avestan, the bird is deemed to be 'knowledgeable and praiseworthy' referring to the Ushāhin Gāh & the Ushā Bāmi (Hōshbām) recitation.

Hādōkht Nask, verse 41: “it listens attentively to the resounding recitations of the Hōshbām in the homestead and having acquired knowledge it walks away”.

The Avestan derivation of the word literally is ‘*Parō*’ meaning ‘before / in advance / beforehand and ‘*Darēs*’ meaning to see / envisage / predict. It, therefore, senses, envisages and foresees the impending period of Dawn. By its repeated crowing it scares away the lingering evil attribute of sloth (Bushyāsta) and thus assists the persons in the homestead to arouse from deep sleep.

Vāndidād 18.15&23: Spoke Ahura Mazda: ‘The bird Parō-dars, O Spitama Zarathushtra, whom slothful persons call ‘Kaharkatas’ will send its mighty calls before Dawn to the industrious and diligent persons.

Vāndidād 18.29: This bird, Parō-dars who possesses, like Mother Earth, the ability of foresight, also knows the path towards the place of ‘Best Existence/Best Consciousness - Vahishtām Mano’

During Avestan times in a land based economy, focused around the slow cycle of the soil, the early morning crowing of the rooster heralded nothing but the onset and growing optimism of a new day. The repeated crowing sound was serene music to the ears of the industrious, as it indicated it was time to wake up and hasten to fulfil the responsibility of the day’s activities. In the Avestan life of a land-based economy it was a period of time, which could not to be lightly dismissed. There was no place at all for inactivity, void, negative attitudes or procrastination. The entire text of our scriptures bubbles and vibrates with thrills of constant optimism, positive desires and hope, and a strong will to do better and better

This early morning glow of ‘*Ushā*’ has been emphasised even in the Vedas, which mention Ushā awakens first and rises earlier than anyone (to arise along with Ushā was a virtue emphasized also in our Avestan scriptures). ‘*Those who rise with her are promised abundant rewards and the glow of an optimistic outlook.*’ Meantime, ‘*let the slothful slumber on*’, add the Vedas. It is just before the rising of the sun that the sky glows, bursting out in colours. The Vedas describe this in a rather prosaic manner. ‘*Clothed in shining garments Ushā arrives bubbling with zest and new hope to display her colourful garments and wondrous splendour. Sitting on the laps of her parents (Mother Earth - ‘Mahimātā’ of the Ṛg Veda and Father Sky - Dyāus Pitār) Ushā brings joy to the Earth, graces and blessings to all the finer qualities of life.*’

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the translation in Gujarati is printed on the left page of the book and the same verse in the Roman script and its translation in English on the page opposite.

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-Sam Kerr
Sydney, Australia