

## The mystique nature of touch

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### [Pronunciation symbols:

Pronounce **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 **Food**; **añ nasally** as in the **Avestan word avañ**; **eñ** as in the French **'trés bieñ'**; **oñ nasally** as in the French **'boñ voyage'**; **ūn nasally** as in **'Humayuñ'**]

### Direct or indirect contact

Decades ago I had visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Japan. There were no guides. Silence was strictly maintained. We were given the option of moving about freely but along one directed path or of being guided by a taped commentary on a portable recorder with headphones. The photographs, the life-like models and exhibits were painstakingly made to appear real. They would have been sickening to the stoutest of hearts. There was this distorted watch showing the time 8.30 (popularized by Salvador Dali's painting), the precise time the atom bomb was detonated 570 meters above the dome of the Town Hall, calculated to promote a wider area of ground destruction than it would have otherwise done if detonated by ground impact. There were the steps of the Town Hall singed black from the intense heat but for the clear outline of a charcoaled human form lying on the steps. There was a frightening life-size scene of this lady, in the terminal pangs of agonizing death but still trying to protect her dignity by bending to hold up folds of her stripped skin in the manner of the folds of a cloth. It was as if she was trying to hide whatever was left of her skinless nakedness showing only her deeply scorched muscles and tissues. Most other scenes were so disturbingly nauseating that those who had opted to move about freely without being guided by headphones were only doing so, stunned, in the manner of benumbed zombies. Others who had accepted the earphones suddenly stood dazed when the commentary ended, quite oblivious to the fact they were obstructing others. One lady from Australia was sobbing softly as I joined a small group of people some distance from the end.

Two quite insensitive men, obviously known or related to her trundled along merrily to join our group. One of them jibed at her. *"Now, now, what's all this whimpering about? Didn't they knock your old man off at 'Changi'?"* At this stage her sobs erupted into a volley of poignant cries. Everyone in the small group and the two quickly dispersed but I held my ground as she wept profusely. There was nothing very much to say. All I could do (even to a total stranger) was to place my hand on her shoulder and press the fingers gently. Seconds later, she stopped weeping, wiped her face and moved away. In the afternoon, seeing me at another tourist site she approached me, introduced herself and handed me pen and paper to write down my name and address. Silently, I scribbled. Weeks later, a brief letter arrived *".....and, thank you for not saying anything."* She had 'touched' me in return. Here was a lady who was robbed of all her privileges of ever seeing her father except in photos taken before her birth by the inhumanities perpetrated by a war (as all wars do). He had died as a prisoner-of-war in a far off alien land under cruel circumstances in a war camp. Yet, she possessed a kind of remorse and a kind of compassion for all humanity. To my mind, she had, all at once, become truly a very special person.

There are times when we do not always seem to believe totally in ourselves until someone reveals that deep something inside, within us. It is so valuable, so worth of listening to (that is, if given expression), so worthy of trust and, so sacred to qualities that touch our heart. That something is the deeply dwelling *'human spirit'*, which seems to come alive when we are made alive. When it does become blunted we tend to retract within our cloistered selves. Yet, the evil of envy, greed, suspicion, anger .....etc. and the temptations of wanting to impose self-righteous attitudes on others are also experiences around us and even, on occasions, impetuously surface from within our own being. But, most times our deep human longing for life can overcome such evil with constructive effort through the nobility of the human spirit. The splendour of our earthly environment, its sights, sounds, fragrances form moments of beauty, which also awaken our *'being'* at the moment of snapping out of the final moment of our deep nightly slumber, feeling happy to be alive.

In a recent 2-day Symposium on ‘Happiness’ in Sydney the person, a total stranger, seated next to me tapped me on my shoulder as we were leaving for the morning break. He seemed to be somewhat unhappy about the goings-on about ‘happiness’ and ways of increasing it. As we shared the morning tea and talked congenially we developed a certain amicable bond. Yet, there was something about him, which my gut feeling felt about him that did not seem quite right. Suddenly, he changed our smooth progression of courteous small talk and queried me on the proceedings. He asked me what I really felt ‘happiness’ was. Caught unawares and not having had enough time to read his mind more deeply I blurted out, “To my simple way of thinking, it seems, ‘happiness’ is life itself; every single moment of it”. At this point I noted the sombre features of his anxious face and the sharp fissures in the facial skin due to tension of his facial muscles, relax considerably. His face became somewhat serene and his previous uneasy body language became less edgy. Realising I was a Surgeon he opened up. He was suffering from late stages of terminal cancer and queried me intensely on the various details. He left early in the afternoon and did not attend the next day. When I rang I was told he had been unable to cope with the stress of travel and the long hours of remaining seated. He had taken a turn for the worse with profound weakness and had to be hospitalised. The following day he died peacefully in sleep.

Is it then possible we are really able to communicate belief in the basic minds of some people, such that they come to believe in themselves and perhaps accept, as is, the happiness of just being alive? Yes, it does seem so. Moment by moment the experiences of ‘our aliveness, our being (which is life)’ seem to almost impel us to continue to progress further in spite of all the oppositions, setbacks, tragedies and, at times, what seems as utter hopelessness. Thought by thought, word by word, face to face, eye to eye we seem to plod along not realizing the silent significances we are exposed to, constantly *touching us*, constantly *reaching out*.

Holy Bible - Acts: 17, 27 (New International Version)

*‘God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.’ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.....’*

So does our Holy Avesta emphasise on the attributes of touch. It greatly influences our Inner being and therefore our quality of life. The Avestan word, ‘**Pāywand**’ (**Pāyvand**, **Pāiwand**), meaning ‘contact’ - direct or indirect (See **Fig. 1**) also means ‘relating to’ / ‘reaching out’. It is heartening to realise that in strife torn Afghanistan a national movement ‘Pāiwand’ (their ancestral word) is being promoted recently. It is described as meaning ‘Unity’ (remaining in touch/close contact for a better understanding among the different warring factions). In modern times, among the ‘Alternative methods of treatment’ there is one called ‘**Reiki**’ - a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation, which is believed to promote healing. ‘**Rei**’ is ‘God’s Wisdom or a Higher Power’ and ‘**Ki**’ (‘Chi’ equates to and is often pronounced ‘Ki’) is ‘life force energy’. Reiki, thus, is actually ‘spiritually guided life force energy.’ It is administered by ‘laying on/clasping hands’ and is based on the idea that an unseen ‘life force energy, as vibes’ flows through the trained therapist enhancing the process of healing and causing the recipient to ‘feel alive’. When the ‘Ki’ is low we are more likely to feel stressful. If it is high, we are more capable of feeling elated and well.



**Fig 1** ‘Pāywand/Pāiwand’ can be attained by direct contact through the sense of touch or by indirect contact, as our priests do sometimes by touching or holding a fold of cloth.

We can also attain contact through the medium of our other senses, commonly through a silent eye-to-eye, body language and thought contact, by the visual contact of reading the holy words, and finally via the senses of taste & smell (stirring up attention, memories/‘entering the heart of a loved one’) as in delicious cooking, use of cosmetics/perfumes.....

In Yazd there has been a rather strict ceremonial ritual lasting 9 days and nights (*Barashnum ē Nōshwā* - cleansing through penance). The volunteer has to endure a rigorous retreat of 9 days and nights involving the total denial of all daily, even basic comforts, which Zarathushtra had to suffer when he was incarcerated in a dungeon by Kai Vishtāspa. There is no bedding or sitting provision. The volunteer, wearing no clothes has to lie on hard floor with no pillow, bed sheet or covering and has a plain course diet. His bath is cold water poured on to him, seated on the ground. After years of wandering vast distances in search of those who would listen and

enduring the rigours of constant ridicule, assault and even expulsion from settlements Zarathushtra, experiencing the horrors of the prehistoric underground dungeon, would have, by now, reached the lowest ebb of endurance. It was Queen Hutaōssa (Pāhlavi: Hutaōkhsha meaning ‘artisan’ (present Gujarati derivatives Hutaokhshi, Hutokshi, Hutoxi...etc) who through her humanitarian zeal decided to inquire into Zarathushtra’s Hymns and reflect on them. While his conniving adversaries were at last convinced that Zarathushtra’s end was nigh they would have, through all their power in the court, armed strength and intrigue failed to realise the simplest observation and determination of a lady in the court. Zarathushtra and his early disciples in their pure heart, however, could visualise the low-key dormant potential in the power of this lady, whose hands had rocked many a cradle and supported and nourished to strength many infants in the illustrious family of Naōtar (*Pāhlavi/Gujarati: Naōzar*). She was herself encouraged as a unique individuality in the family tradition to listen carefully to matters humanitarian and reflect before making a decision.

*Rām Yasht 15.35: “.....of Ahura Mazda there were praises from Hutaōssā, herself of many brothers, a descendent of the illustrious family of Naōtar....”*

*In Gāthā Vahishtō-ishti Zarathushtra acknowledges the immense debt of Queen Hutaōssā, whose pious influence convinced her husband, through ‘acts of piety, of the genuineness of Zarathushtra’s Prophetic vision’.*

Such was the transformation of Kai (Kavi) Vishtāspa, her husband that he was prepared to stand alone in favour of Zarathushtra against all the bitterly opposing Kavis of the kingdom.

*Gāthā Ushtavaiti 46.14: “.....who is thy friend & follower of truth? ....Kavi Vishtāspa is the man, who shall herald peace and goodwill to men..... through the Good Mind.....”*

We would have noticed during our religious ceremonies how our priests make ‘Pāiwand’ in various ways at certain intervals. The purpose is to reinforce the *Spānta power* of one pious person with another in order to make the act of worship more effective - reinforcing pious intent, as it were. The other purpose is to give added strength so as to be defying any possible evil intent. To achieve this there must be at least two persons establishing physical contact directly or indirectly. The latter can be achieved by holding a fold of cloth between the two. As far as our learned priests are aware the only ritual ceremony in which an only priest officiates is during the ‘Stum’ (*Gujarati - Satum*) prayers, at least in Mumbai. The direct or indirect contact is so very important that if a person, maintaining ritual purity has even indirect contact with an impure person or object, his purity is deemed to be nullified - the evil influence of the latter being believed to have passed through, like the waves of an electric current.

In the past, most priests would not eat food prepared by a lay person nor would they eat while having direct or verbal contact with a lay person, just in case they would unwittingly be brought with ritual uncleanness (See **Fig. 2**). As a child in Surat, my inquisitiveness and inquiring nature had always made me wonder why a whole row of priests should be seated separately having their meal in silence apart from the rest. Decades ago a senior priest had taken me around an Agiāry and showed me the separate kitchen-cum-dining room specially reserved for the cooking of consecrated food prepared only by persons in ritual purity for ceremonies as well as for the priests (“Those good old days are now gone,” he stated regrettably).



**Figure 2:** Rows of priests seated separately having their meal in silence apart from the rest. Photo (of late 1800s) taken by French traveller, writer, journalist and photographer Mademoiselle Delphine Menant. Born in 1850, she travelled extensively and lived among the many Zarathushti settlements, both urban and rural, of Gujarat, taking enormous number of photos and gathering material for the text of her 2 books published in France.

**Verbal and visual (written script and body language) communication - ‘touching’ words & ‘touching’ sights:**

In our Faith the dog ranks second only to humans in dignity in the animal kingdom. Ill-treatment of a dog would equate to ill-treating another human. It is said in our Scriptures that the dog, ‘Zarringōsh’, guarding *Chinvatō pārātu* makes it extremely difficult (or even obstructs) the soul of a person from crossing the Bridge if the person has been wilfully cruel to a dog during life. In the absence of a second person or priest to create *Pāiwand* a dog held on a lead has been made use of, in the past. To this day, showing kindness to a pet dog or even stray dogs is well known among Zarathushtis, who try and save some food on their plate for the dog (‘*Chom-ē-shwā*’).



**Figs. 3:** I had been fortunate in being invited, while in Iran in the 1980s, to attend various ceremonies in the various Zarathushti villages around Yazd. Unlike on the Subcontinent the faithful who attend the ritual ceremonies in Iran take active part in the ceremonial proceedings minute by minute, thus making the ceremony very lively. Every now and then the officiating priest would raise his index finger as he pronounced the Avestan words, ‘*Āfrināmi*’ or ‘*Vispō-Khwāthram*’. According to Manekji Hataria’s (1813-1890 CE) article on the *Religious Ritual Practices of the Iranian Zoroastrians* in *Zoroastrian Rituals* the myrtle sprig is dipped in a vessel called ‘nava’ containing water.



**Fig. 4:** During a Jashan ceremony at the Azargoshasb Fire Temple, 2013. When starting a new ‘*kardā*’ (chapter/section), at the word ‘*āfrināmi* / *āfrināmēh*’, the priest and everyone present picks up a leaf or flower and raises a finger of the right hand. Then, while reciting up to ‘*vispō khwāthram*’ they raise the second finger. The fingers are lowered when reciting the ‘*Yathā Ahu Variyō*’ prayer. This process is repeated for every *kardā*.

An *Āfringan* ceremony is also called a *flower ceremony*. When the flowers, placed in the ‘*sēs*’ (ritual tray) are held up or, if two or more priests are present, the flowers are exchanged (to attain Pāywand) between the priests during recitation of that part of the *Afringan’s* ‘*humatanām*’ prayer (Yasna 35.2: The faithful taking active part in ceremony are called “glorifiers and mediators, as we are for the good.”). In Iran, when plants are not available, a finger is sometimes held up instead - the prayers that accompany the holding of the sprigs are called the *Afrināmēh*. Priests in India generally use flowers - at times, roses. Priests in Iran generally use myrtle (murd), pomegranate or jujube (red date, or Chinese date) sprigs. The flower stem or sprig should be a hand span in length. Mary Boyce writes, “*This gesture and the response each time thus produced a kind of union between the priests and the congregation in a strong sense of corporate worship.*” After the worship, the congregation takes part in ‘*Hamāzōr*’ (*may we remain united in strength*) - symbolising brotherhood and unity. The priest turn to the person adjacent to him and each would take the others right hand and connect his palm with the other (*Pāiwand*) at the same time to exchange the greeting. This salutation is, then, in turn, passed around sequentially along the line of those seated on the carpet. At the same time the ‘*Afarganiyuñ*’, the Fire Vase (see **Fig. 4** Delphine Menant’s photo of late 1880s) is taken around the congregation for each faithful to pay homage to the burning fire.



**Figure 5:** Photo (late 1800s) by French writer, journalist, photographer Mademoiselle Delphine Menant’s. Parsi lady putting frankincense & myrrh on the burning sandalwood (Gujarati: *Lōbān*) before presenting the *Afarganiyuñ* (Fire Vase) to every person in the congregation to extend for gestures of homage to Fire, thus creating a genuine closeness between the members of the congregation and a genuine feeling of spontaneity.



The Qadimis of the Subcontinent have adopted the 'Hamāzor', the Prayer recital for unity from the Iranian Khordeh Avesta, Book of Common Prayers. After the fall of the Sassanian Dynasty CE 641, Zarathushtis having lived under extremely cruel oppression of the Arab regime in Iran, recited it at the end of their daily Kusti prayers and after all ritual ceremonies as a mark of solidarity.

**The Hamazor** - A Prayer of Unity

*Hamāzōr bim,  
hamāzōr ashō bim,  
hamāzōr vāsh kərfē bim;  
ham kərfē kārān bim,  
dūr az vanāh kārān bim,  
sarē sarāt va chinvat pūl buzrag shād va āsān mān,  
bēvadīrad Bēhēst Garōthmān va fashum akhān raushan Garōthmān,  
hamā khur-rami avar rasād.*

**Its translation: -**

(May we remain) ***united in strength,***  
(may we remain) ***united in righteousness,***  
(may) we remain) ***united in many good deeds, and***  
(may we remain) ***the doers of all meritorious deeds, too,***  
(may we remain) ***afar from the guile of evil-doers,***  
(may we be able to) ***cross the Chinwad Bridge with rejoicing and ease, from over the summit,***  
(may we, then,) ***attain eternal bliss in the Heavenly Celestial Light of Garōthmān,***  
(may) ***such pious yearnings be granted unto us.***

**Verbal and visual (body language) communication - 'touching' words & 'touching' sights.**

These subtle means, in many ways, also touch us, through the thought process. From prehistoric times we have gone through several changes in our spoken word. Commencing with the *Gathic language* of Zarathushtra, down to *Avestan*, the *western dialect of Avestan* after migration from our ancestral Homeland, the imposition *Pahlavi* (a dialect of *Aramaic*) during the Parthian era, a continuation of Pahlavi during the Sassanian Dynasty and after refuge in Gujarat, a gradual *change to Farsi in Iran and to Gujarati in India* and, finally, after migration to several western nations, a *change to several languages of each host country* in the diaspora. It has been recognized that with each change in the spoken word a small part of the culture and its effective use in 'touching the other person' are regrettably lost.

It was around early CE 1000 that some concern arose among the Parsis in Gujarat about the fact that the Pahlavi language we brought to India was being replaced rapidly by Gujarati. It seems a deputation was sent to Yazd about CE 1010 to inquire and ask for advice. With only a handful of persons who could speak or understand Pahlavi the Iranian Zarathushtis were equally alarmed that the Pahlavi language was being replaced by Farsi (also called Parsi & Modern Persian) in Iran. Within a few years the Pahlavi language both in Iran and in Gujarat became extinct. The Kurds however have vigorously resisted the imposition of the Arabic language to this day. They still speak a dialect of Pahlavi.

The difference between the two groups was that the Zarathushtis of Gujarat never really spoke the pure (*Shuddha Gujarati*) but a dialect of it, compared to the Iranians who spoke immaculate Farsi and even excelled in the Arts, the Sciences and the Humanities. The Parsis of India did excel too but after the British occupation. After the fall of the Zarathushti Sassanian Empire in CE 641 those who fled to China had become totally assimilated within the Chinese culture in about 200 years. It is recoded that Yazdegard III's great-grandson had been promoted to lead a division of the Chinese army and was still hoping to reconquer Iran. There were reports of Atash Kadehs in China but gradually news of Zarathushtis began to taper off and ultimately all traces of their existence as Zarathushtis in China disappeared. In the 1800s fresh waves of Zarathushti traders and migrants migrated to Shanghai, Hong Kong and other cities but again most from mainland China fled during the Communist regime.

In 1965 I had taken Ektachrome slide photos of two Pahlavi Inscriptions engraved with chisel and hammer on rock in the Kanheri Caves at Borivali (Mumbai). These have faded away. They were a list of Pahlavi names with dates (presumably of visitors) in both inscriptions. The dates on four engravings read as follows: -

1. Year 378 of Yazdēgardi Era, on the day Ahurmazd (Hormazd) of the month Mitrō (Mēhr) (10th Oct. 1009),
2. Ruz Mēhr/ Mah Avan Year 378 of Yazdēgardi Era (24 Nov. 1009)
3. Ruz Din/ Mah Mēhr Year 390 of Yazdēgardi Era (30 Oct. 1021)

4. Small inscription of just two names on a Stupa in a small enclave of Cave 90 - Year 390 of Yazdēgardi Era, Ruz Din/ Mah Mēhr Year (30 Oct. 1021) suggesting that the language (&/or script) could still be alive then. Western scholars, with all their good intentions have made several errors during their translations of the names mistaking Indian names for Iranian names. This, I hope to correct in a separate article.

It is with this view in mind that in just over 50 years the State of Israel has managed to almost resurrect their near-extinct, ancestral Hebrew language, including reversion to ancestral names. It is now the only language spoken in the Halls of State and the Hebrew script is used in administrative documents. The *lingua franca*, the spoken word of the masses is however likely to take some generations to change totally to Hebrew through early interaction in childhood learning through schools and also at home.

As migration in search of greener pastures and more amicable climes, for trade and finally conquest proceeded further west from our eastern Primal Homeland in Central Asia, assimilation with local culture and languages began to occur. The pure Avestan of our scriptures was considerably altered. An example is a simple statement of immense dignity on many Fire Altars and on the two Fravashis of Cyrus the Great found in the ruins of the Capital City, Pārsāgard (Greek: Pasārgadae) of Pārsavā (now Pars) was ‘Adam Kourash Khshayāthiya Hakhamānishya’ in the western dialect. In pure Avestan it would be ‘Ahami Kourash Khshathra Hakhamāni’.

Of the many languages spoken in the west one prominent language was ‘Aramaic’, particularly in the field of trade. There would have been considerable resentment at the change amongst the elders, the priests and the Māghavans. Needless as the decades passed by there was almost a takeover of the pure Eastern Avestan by the western dialect (almost in the same way as Parsi Gujarati has become derived as a dialect of the pure ‘Shuddha’ Gujarati). This fact could have contributed to the determination of maintaining the ancient Indo-Iranian oral tradition and resisting our Gathic and Avestan scriptures from being written down until as late as during the reign of Darius I (521-486 BCE). The emphasis, then, as it is now, could have been based on the fact that the divine ‘Gathic Revealed Māñthra’ of the Prophet and the later ‘Avestan Holy Māñthra Spenta’ carried such potent vibratile efficacies and such beneficent and intensely devout values that they not be so loosely interfered with. During the reign of Darius I’s 521-486 CE the Gathic and Avestan texts were put into writing and recorded in Gold in the cuneiform script on cured hides (one set being deposited in the library in Babylon and the other after careful protective coverings deposited in a vault believed to be somewhere in an underground vault of Mount Damavand. It could be for this reason that Zarathushtis consider the Mountain so sacred that Jashans are held on certain auspicious days.



**Fig. 6:** In modern times, it was the study of the trilingual Achaemenian and Sassanian Behistun (also called Bistun/Bisutin) Rock inscriptions chiselled on the face of a mountainous rock 300 ft. above the ground, that early western scholars found helpful in comparing and understanding the Avestan language and our history and in attempting their first translations. They were inscribed in Elamite (Susia - the Iranian language of Elam), Babylonian, and Old Persian (the western dialect of the Avestan language of our Scriptures) beneath the panel of sculptures in 3

Columns of cuneiform text. The image depicts Darius I with his foot upon the vanquished rebellious leader, Gaumātā lying helplessly underneath. Behind Darius are shown two of his supporters carrying the implements which symbolize his power as the ruler. Before Darius are nine prisoners roped together about the neck, representing the leaders of those peoples that had resisted Darius’ authority and rebelled. Floating above the scene, and to whom Darius’ eyes and right hand are raised, floats the symbolic representation of the Fravahar lending divine legitimate power and authority to the proceedings.

After the death of Alexander 323 BCE the subsequent takeover by the Greek Commanders resulted in an era of

‘hellenisation’ with some erosion of Zarathushtrian values. The Greek occupation by the Seleucids and early Parthians (247 BC - 224 CE) were reluctantly Zarathushtrian. Some resurgence of the Zarathushti Faith was commenced by *Mithradates 171-138 BCE*, who initiated a genuine effort to recover all destroyed Avestan text and to collect even the flimsiest of burnt fragments and re-record them in chronological order. Later, **Valkash I** (51-77 CE) made a concerted effort to correlate the more scattered fragments. But for their initiative we would have been left with a much meagre Avesta, our present Holy Book. With the complete takeover from the Parthians by *Ardeshir (Pāpakān) I* in 224 CE a fresh resurgence resulted in inquiries and re-introduction of a truly Avestan way of life during the Sassanian rule (224-641 CE).

By the time the Sassanian Emperor, *Khushru I* (titled ‘*Anoushi-Ravān ē Ādil*’ - *Immortal Soul, who was Just*) came to the throne the Semitic languages of which Aramaic was widely spoken had become firmly established. Among the many wise administrative steps he took was to establish the faculty of Medicine in Gondeshapur University at Shahpourgard in 550 CE and invited scholars and philosophers from Greece, Egypt, rest of Asia, India. It was the first ever non-religious, non-ethnic University established and recorded in the history of education. The medium of teaching was Aramaic although the official State language was still Pahlavi. It is believed the *Pāzand* script emerged apparently as a result of translating, interpreting and phonetically transcribing the Pahlavi texts into a more helpful alphabet. At the same time attempts were made to eliminate Semitic words and phrases from the ‘old Parthian Pāhlavi’, which had only 12 Primary letters and many alphabet letters had multiple phonetic sounds, making lucid reading of Pāhlavi texts rather puzzling.

### **Silence as a means of effective communication (keeping in touch)**

Well over 1300 years in exile, through the cruel experiences of displacement, harassments, persecution, the followers of Zarathushtra have learnt to build a steady powerful mainstream of quiet Zarathushtrians. Their beliefs embodied in their Faith have become akin to the mainstream of a river. Remaining silent and unseen under the superficial surface ripples and flow, which show only the physical presence it has remained the backbone, sustaining them in their ‘exilic’ state, guiding their embedded beliefs with consistent unbroken vigour and undeterred steadiness. The large number which form the mainstream, we know, have remained silent even during even during the most trying of circumstance.

*Gāthā Ushtavaiti 43.15: Zarathushtra expresses the recognition of his first contact with Ahura Mazda’s Good Mind (Vohu Mano), which he says, gave him a feeling of reassurance and tranquillity. Through the influence of Vōhu Manō he realises that*

**‘silent meditation (Tushnamaitish vahishta)’ is best for the tranquil sustenance of the Soul.**

*“.....thou art divine, O Mazda. I recognised thee, O Ahura when the good thoughts of Vohu Mano entered my mind, indicating that silent meditation sustains the soul well.”*

**Tushnamaiti** was a pre-Zarathushtra Indo-Aryan Yazata of Silent Meditation/Contemplation. Thought, indeed, is a silent word. Shakespeare who had a way with words mentions ‘*Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but little happy if I could say how much*’. And again, ‘*Thoughts*’, he mentions, ‘*ten times faster glide than the sun’s beams*’.

To counter and stem the tide of ungainly thought there is an emphasis placed on the beneficent efficacies of the recitation to Spānta Ārmaiti ‘of the beneficently perfect state of mind’. Zarathushtrians still select two auspicious days of the month - Ruz Din (Yazata Daēna) to help in the path of clear thinking & Ruz Mānθraspand (Avestan: Mānθra Spānta), being ‘keeper of the Staōta Yasna’, to help in the progress of the intellectual train of thought. There is a belief that in deep silent meditation a person is likely to reach a deeply joyous and exuberant feeling, almost akin to ‘*a sense of Ecstasy*’ which has enabled divine Prophets as uniquely gifted ‘messengers’ to imbibe the vision of wisdom from the Creator as ‘*Revelation*’ - *beneficent visions of the present and future*, and then convey them to us lesser humans.

It is recognised that that our ‘Aura’ [*Gathic: (K)hvāre; Avestan: Khwārēna; Pahlavi: Khwārrāh; Modern Persian: & Gujerati Khorēh*] like our Fravashi had already existed prior to the birth of our earthly body (Avestan Tanu; Modern Persian: Tan), which believed to envelope an inward invisible form called ‘Kerhp’ (Yasna 55.1). The Khwārēna possessed by ordinary individuals like us, has been described variously as personal attraction, personal magnetism, vibratory influence, even charisma. The Khwārēna possessed by gifted extraordinary individuals - ‘Prophets/Messengers/Saints (the word ‘saint’ adopted in the Middle Ages from ancient Indo-Iranian *Vedic Sanskrit Sant/ Gathic: Kai, Kavi*)’ is a uniquely supreme aura often referred to as ‘*Divine Grace, Supernatural Glory*... ‘in the form of an iridescent ray of light, descending from above and

filling their person with its energy and causing the joyous feeling of ecstasy, and resulting in a lingering illuminating glow as a **'Halo'**. Yazata Mithra, himself has always been shown in rock carvings, bas-reliefs and frescoes as possessing a star like 'halo of radiating rays of light emerging around his head'. It was adopted millennia later by many Roman Emperors, including Constantine I in their crowns (see 'Avesta--Zoroastrian Archives': Kerr, Sam: [Sassanian Dynasty -- Historical Perspective](#) and other articles).

*Meher Yasht, X.55: 'Our auras were individually collected and supported by Yazata Mithra, the 'Lord of all Lights' who watches over them, aided by Varuna and Apam Napāt.*

The Gathic word for the Sun is [(K)**Hvarē Khshaēta** - Aura, which is illuminating]; (Pahlavi: Khorshed)]. All heavenly bodies in space possess an inherent power of mutually attractive vibratile force of an electro- magnetic field keeping them in a harmonious relation to each other. Everything (even the wandering Comet) in space is in a perpetually dynamic motion. The veneration of Nature's Law of the Asha/Rta complex is referred to in the Staōta Yēsnya (a form of worship involving the vibratile frequency waves), which modern Physics acknowledges. The original Staōta Yēsnya was formed of 21 Nasks of the Fshushō-Māñthra (blissful Holy words) but (after destruction) our present reconstructed Staota Yasna appears to be accepted as the 17 Chapters of the 5 Holy Gathas, Yasna Haptanghaiti, Yathā Ahu Vairyo, Ashēm Vōhu, Yənghē Hātām & Airyēmā Ishyō (possibly also Yasna 14, 15, 54,56,58) recitations, an anthology of 33 parts composed by Zarathushtra.

In his Airyema Ishyo composition Zarathushtra exclaims:

**“*Staōta Yēsnya yazamaidē, yā Dāttā angēhush pouruyēhayā.....*”**  
**“*Reverence be to the Staōta Yēsnya, which constitutes the revealed***  
***Laws of ancient yore as laid down by the Creator.....*”**

So it is, even in life on Earth. A magnetic field of personal attraction - an Aura exists with each self. Each person's dynamic quests with selfless thinking, nobility of speech and action allow the Aura progress to perform more worthy actions. Veneration in our beliefs may be strictly silent and meditative or articulate. It is this perfectly harmonious phase vibrations that is believed to lead to the attainment of the highest plane of Zarathushtra's **Garō-dāmāna** (gar: song/ dāmāna:abode - **the House of song, adopted in later Faiths that followed, as 'Heaven'**) [Avestan: **Garōnmāna** /Pahlavi: **Garōsmān** /Gujerati: **Garōthmān**]

#### **Gatha Vōhu Khshathra: Yasna 51.15**

*Hyat mīzdām Zarathushtrō Magavabyō coist parā –*

*Garō-dāmānē Ahurā Mazdā jasat pouruy.....*

*(The reward, which Zarathushtra hath promised his Brotherhood, will be the 'abode on high', which Ahura Mazda did first attain.....)*

#### **The observance of 'Bāj' in silence** (Pahlavi: *Vāj*, derived from 'Vacha' - a given word)

This practice is believed to be pre-Zarathushtrian. It was **a way of remaining 'in touch'** with the Supreme even while involved in ordinary day to day activities. The contact occurred sequentially thus: -

1. Having an intention to perform an act.
2. Taking the 'Bāj' by saying an Avestan prayer recitation.
3. Holding the 'Bāj' (Gujerati: *Bāj Dharnā*).
4. Performing the intended act in silence.
5. Leaving (or ending) the 'Bāj'.

“The purpose,” according to Mary Boyce, “is to surround one's intended activity with a defending shield of Holy words (*Māñthra Spənta*) whose vibratile efficacy would have been disturbed by the interrupting words of ordinary speech. This of course requires self-discipline and devotion; yet was carried out by Kings and commoners even in extremely dire circumstances.” Indeed, Yazdegird III's demise (651 CE) was due to his taking the 'Bāj' before having his meal provided by a kindly miller who had given him refuge. He became suspicious and fearful he was harbouring a Zarathushti. In the fast life of today some retired orthodox Zarathushtis still observe this practice. So did Khusru II (Khusru Pārviz - 29th Feb 627 CE) before his expected assassination while in prison.

#### **The vibratile Holy Words of repentance - keeping in touch**

Although charity, forgiveness, remorse, compassion are great virtues in our beliefs there is (absolutely) no hint at forgiveness at a cosmic level. All Zarathushtis are squarely responsible for their thought, word and action. All good and not-so-good Earthly activity is taken into detailed account and registered for weighing, both during the first Judgement after death at Chinvalo Peretu and during the Final Judgement after Resurrection (*Gathic: 'Frashā'-kar, Avestan: Frasho-kereti; Pahlavi: Frashgard*). The Patet recitations do not absolve any single sin



or the author of the sin; neither is there any authority invested in any mortal to forgive the sinner during life and any judge during the two Judgements after death. The recitation of the Patets only makes the person hopefully better to cope with the vagaries of life. (See my '*Ahura Mazda's Good Mind - The Divine Cosmic Computer*' Kerr, Sam: [Sassanian Dynasty -- Historical Perspective](#) and other articles).

### **Propitiation of the Fravashis of the departed - keeping in touch**

The 7 obligatory Festivals of Thanksgiving, the Gahanbars are communal seasonal festivities of 5 days each. The 6<sup>th</sup> is extended to felicitate the Fravashis of the departed who revisit the Gəti world, Nao-Ruz, then, being the 7<sup>th</sup> Festival of renewal and obligation. Mary Boyce describes it vividly as “at once the ending and as well as the beginning of the devotional period of the year.” During these Festival days we pray for the Soul since it needs help and to the Fravashis since they are ever-present helpers, guardians & protectors, leading to a kind of kindred happiness.

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[My main source for comparative studies in conjunction with the Vēdic and Sanskrit Texts has always remained these two outstanding books of Irach J. S. Taraporewala. There are several instances in his book where this great Sanskrit/Gāthic/Avestan scholar has referred to certain observations in passing during comparative studies. I have, at places, merely tried to dwell a little further into such passing comments].

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