

## Seraosha

This word appears in the Gathas (GAv. *səraoša-*),<sup>1</sup> and throughout in YAv. texts (YAv. *sraoša-*)<sup>2</sup> and in Pahlavi texts as well (Pahl. *srosh*).<sup>3</sup> In the Gathas, we also have the negative form *asrušti-* 'non-listening' in 3 verses.<sup>4</sup> Many translators have translated *səraoša-* as 'obedience', and its opposite *asrušti-* as 'disobedience'.<sup>5</sup> With respect, these are interpretive translations that have been influenced by other religious paradigms regarding what 'God' requires of His followers ~ Obedience. By contrast, I think Skjaervo 2006 has hit the nail on the head. He defines *səraoša-* as 'readiness to listen', and its opposite *asrušti-* as "lack of readiness to listen or refusal to listen".

Let us first consider 'obedience' as the proposed meaning for *səraoša-*. The English word 'obedience' is a noun derived from the verb 'to obey'. However, there is no dispute amongst linguists that *səraoša-/sraoša-* is a noun derived from the verb *srao-* 'to listen, to hear'.<sup>6</sup>

By definition, 'obedience' means doing what you are told (reflected in the parental admonition, *When you are old enough to think for yourself, I will let you know.*<sup>7</sup> But 'obedience' is not consistent with the ways in which *səraoša-* and related verbs are used in the Gathas. And 'obedience' is inconsistent with Zarathushtra's foundational teachings that we must think, reason, search for truth, and make independent choices ~ each person for himself.<sup>8</sup> So the object of this chapter is to look at the ways in which the noun *səraoša-* and its related verb are used in the Gathas with a view to determining the meaning that Zarathushtra has in mind for these words, and to see if the conclusions we arrive at are consistent with the ways in which *sraoša-* is used in the later texts.

In any inquiry, it is always good to go to the source, and the source of the noun *səraoša-* is the verb *srao-* 'to listen, to hear.'

In English, 'to listen' can be used in two ways, (1) to only hear what is said, and (2) to hear and implement what is heard. And in the Gathas, the noun *səraoša-* is used in exactly the same two ways.

1. In at least one verse 'to listen' means only to hear what is said "Listen [*sraotā*] with your ears to the best things. Reflect with a clear mind ..." Y30.2, Insler 1975. In this context "listen [*sraotā*]" means only to hear what others may have to tell us. There is no question of "listen [*sraotā*]" meaning to hear and implement what is heard.

2. But in many verses, 'to listen' means to hear what is said and implement what one hears. Here are some examples.

In Y33.11, speaking to the Lord, Wisdom, and His divine attributes, Zarathushtra says, '...listen [*sraotā mōi*] to me, give compassion to me, ...' Y33.11,<sup>9</sup> my translation. Here it would be of no help to Zarathushtra if the Divine were simply to 'hear' his request for help. His intent in saying '...listen [*sraotā*] to me,' is clearly to ask the Divine to hear his request and do something about it.

In Y49.7, the word "that" refers to Wisdom's word, His envisionment (mentioned in the preceding verse). "And let a person listen [*sraotū*]<sup>10</sup> to that with good thinking, Wise One. Let him listen [*sraotū*] with truth ... Which clan, which family shall abide by Thy laws, thus being one which shall give good fame to the (whole) community?" Y49.7, Insler 1975. Here again, "let a person listen [*sraotū*]" includes evaluating Wisdom's words with good thinking and truth, and abiding by them ~ implementing them.

"The best wish of Zarathushtra Spitama has been heard [*srāvī*]<sup>11</sup> if the Wise Lord shall grant to him those attainments in accord with truth and a good existence for all his lifetime..." Y53.1, Insler 1975. In this verse, 'has been heard [*srāvī*]' does not mean that the Divine ear has just registered Zarathushtra's wish ~ heard it. The phrase 'has been heard' expresses the hope that the Divine may both hear and implement ~ "grant" ~ Zarathushtra's wish.

Other verses using conjugations of the verb *srao-* are consistent with using 'listen' to mean both hear and implement what is heard, and are footnoted.<sup>12</sup>

The foregoing verses demonstrate that the verb *srao-* 'to listen' is used to include both hearing and implementing what is heard. So the question arises: Is the noun *səraoṣa-/sraoṣa-* (which is derived from this verb *srao-*) also used in the same way ~ as hearing and implementing what is heard? It is ~ in both the Gathas and the later texts.

Let us now consider how the noun *səraoṣa-* is used in the Gathas. Zarathushtra uses *səraoṣa-* in 7 verses, and its negative form *asrušī-* ('non-listening') in 3 verses.

In Y33.5 the implied "(of these)" refers to 'non-listening [*asrušīm*]', 'bad thinking', 'deceit', 'opposition' and 'scorn' mentioned in the preceding verse.<sup>13</sup> Zarathushtra says, "I who, at the stopping (of these), shall summon the all-greatest [*səraoṣəm*] for Thee, I shall attain for us here the long-lived rule of good thinking and the paths, straight in accord with truth, wherein the Wise Lord dwells." Y33.5, Insler 1975.

Here, the 'listening' that is *səraoṣəm* includes attaining the rule of good thinking and the paths of truth, which cannot be done by just 'hearing' a teaching with one's ears. It can be done only by both hearing and implementing such teachings.

In Y33.14, referring to himself in the 3d person, he says "For Zarathushtra does give the breath of even his own person as a gift, in order that there be for the Wise One predominance of good thinking along with (predominance) of the action and the word allied with truth, that there be [*səraoṣəm*] and His (good) rule." Y33.14, Insler 1975.

Here the 'listening' that is *səraoṣəm* includes the predominance of good thinking, and the action and word allied with truth ~ hearing and implementing what is heard.

Y45.5, ... (those) who give heed [*səraoṣəm*] and attention to this (word) of mine they shall come to completeness, to non-deathness.

Through actions stemming from a good way of being, Wisdom (is) Lord." Y45.5, my translation. The Insler 1975 translation is footnoted for comparative purposes.<sup>14</sup>

Here, completeness and non-deathness cannot be attained by only 'hearing' the teachings of Wisdom with one's ears. Giving 'heed' *səraoṣəm* (which is also Insler's translation choice) captures the meaning accurately in that 'heed' includes both hearing the teaching, and also the thoughts, words and actions that implement the teaching, ~ all of which bring the soul to completeness and non-deathness ~ ideas that the last line reflects from a different perspective.<sup>15</sup>

In Y43.12 we have both *səraoṣa-* 'listening' and *asrušī-* 'non-listening', used in a way that indicates they are opposites. The words in *italics* represent the words which Zarathushtra has Wisdom telling him, as a way of expressing his ideas. The words in round parentheses are implied (consistent with the normal rules of Avestan usage). This verse has been discussed in detail in another chapter ~ both its meaning and its linguistics ~ with other translations given for comparative purposes.<sup>16</sup>

'But then You said to me, "you have come to truth for instruction, you moreover, to me, have not declared yourself to the contrary, through not listening [*asruštā*] (to truth).'

(So it is) for me to arise, before listening [*səraoṣō*] may come, followed by the wealth/light giving reward (of truth),

(For it is truth) through which He will distribute rewards for (all) conduct in salvation." Y43.12, my translation.

All remaining verses in which *səraoṣā-* is used in the Gathas are footnoted and also demonstrate that the meaning of *səraoṣā-* in the context of these verses is 'listening' in the sense of 'hearing and implementing what is heard'. And the one remaining verse in which *asrušti-* 'non-listening' is used, is also shown.<sup>17</sup>

Is this meaning ~ of 'listening (hearing and implementing what is heard)' ~ consistent with the ways in which *sraoṣā-* is used in YAv. and Pahlavi texts? Well, let us look at the evidence.

In the YAv. texts, *sraoṣā-* is described as a mighty warrior, who is a protector of the poor, truthful, fighting deceit and anger, to bring about the victory of truth and goodness,<sup>18</sup> and forwarding the progress of existence.<sup>19</sup>

Now if we think about it, the concept of *sraoṣā-* of 'listening to the Word of Wisdom and implementing it', (the 'path of truth', the 'path of good thinking'),<sup>20</sup> would indeed generate truthfulness, protection of the poor, overcoming deceit and anger, bringing about the victory of goodness and the true order of existence and thus forwarding the progress of existence.

So we have to wonder ~ originally, did the composers of these YAv. texts think of *sraoṣā-* as a living entity, a real live hero-warrior, or as an allegory representing the concept of 'listening' in the sense of 'hearing the Word of Wisdom and implementing it'? There is an on-going debate amongst students of YAv. texts, as to whether certain concepts (like the amesha spenta) are real beings or allegories.<sup>21</sup> And the same is true of *sraoṣā-*. Opinions are divided. Commenting on the YAv. Yy57 which is dedicated to Sraosha, Mills points out,

"The name Sraosha does not appear to have lost its meaning as an abstract quality, notwithstanding the material imagery..." SBE 31, p. 297, ft. 4.

I agree with him. These YAv. stories were composed to be recited, or sung ~ originally at communal gatherings (and later as ritual chants) ~ in much the same way as ancient bards in Celtic and Scandanavian cultures recited or sang about heroic figures. Parenthetically, the ancient Celts and Scandanavians shared the same ancestral language ~ Indo-European ~ as the ancients who spoke Avestan.<sup>22</sup> To make a story or song interesting to people at communal gatherings, it would need to express ideas in an exciting, heroic, action oriented way (the way movies and other electronic shows attempt to do today). This is why (in my opinion) so many heroic allegorical figures were originally created in the later (YAv.) texts ~ to convey and preserve ideas in the framework of an heroic action drama that would interest people, in an age when most people could not read or write. (Even if we assume Avestan was then a written language,<sup>23</sup> literacy in those ancient times would have been limited to a very few. There was no system of universal education).

But that is just my opinion. Let us look at the evidence of the YAv. texts themselves.

The meaning of the name alone ~ *sraoša-* 'listening to and implementing (the Word of Wisdom)' ~ is not evidence that to the composers of the YAv. texts *sraoša-* was an allegorical figure, because in YAv. texts, many living people were given names which reflected concepts in Zarathushtra's teachings. A few examples from the *Farvardin Yasht* are footnoted.<sup>24</sup> However, scattered throughout the descriptions of Sraosha's heroic deeds in the YAv. texts, we see little bits and pieces of evidence that do indeed suggest that the hero *sraoša-* was an allegory ~ at least originally, to the composers of such texts. For example,

We are told that the 'body' of *sraoša-* is the *mąθrā- spānta-* (the beneficial Word of the Divine), that *sraoša-* is the Word Incarnate, *tanu.mąθra-*.<sup>25</sup> Both these descriptions are different ways of saying 'listening' in the sense of implementing the Word of the Divine. And we are told that the 'fiends' he smites, are anger, wrath, fury (*aēšəma-*), deceit, untruth (*druj-*),<sup>26</sup> ~ there are no capital letters in Avestan script.

Skjaervo 2003 in his YAv. Glossary, states that *ašyō* (nom. sg. of *ašya-*) is a standard epithet of Sraosha, and that the YAv. word *ašya-* means 'one in charge of reward' (from *aši-* 'reward'). Now if Sraosha means listening to ~ hearing and implementing ~ the Word of Wisdom, the path of truth which indeed what generates the reward (of truth), it is easy to understand how this word *ašyō* became a standard epithet of Sraosha in YAv. texts.

In Pazand and Pahlavi texts, it is *Srosh* who assists the soul to cross the Bridge of Discerning,<sup>27</sup> from mortality to an existence not bound by mortality ~ the House of Song, the wholly good existence, ('paradise'),<sup>28</sup> which is exactly what listening to ~ hearing and implementing ~ the Word of the Wisdom, the path of truth, would enable the soul to do. So here again, we can see the same understanding of *Srosh* that is in the Gathas, even though with the passage of time, *Srosh* came to be thought of as a living being, instead of an allegory.

In YAv. texts, the conclusion that *Srosh* was intended to be an allegorical figure ~ at least originally ~ is consistent with the Gathas, in that there is no clear (as distinguished from interpretive) evidence that *səraoša-* in the Gathas, is anything but a concept ~ the concept of listening ~ hearing and implementing the Word of the Divine.

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<sup>1</sup> Bearing in mind that all stems are conjectured (since we have no ancient Av. grammars), and that all Av. nouns have grammatical genders ~ masc., fem., and ntr.:

Grammatical genders are often based on the ending of the stem. So we should not jump to unwarranted conclusions such as that *səraoša-* is masc. because guys always listen to Wisdom, whereas *asrušti-* is fem. because girls do not (listen).

In GAv. Skjaervo 2006 shows the GAv. masc. noun stem *səraoša-* which he says means 'readiness to listen'. The word occurs 7 times in the Gathas, in the following declensions,

<i>səraošō</i>	nom. sg.	in Y43.12, Y44.16,
<i>səraošəm</i>	acc. sg.	in Y28.5, Y33.5, 14, Y45.5,
<i>səraošā</i>	instr. sg.	in Y46.17.

A few mss. however, (shown in Geldner's footnotes) omit the first ə, thus reflecting the YAv. form ~ likely a scribal error when a given text was recopied during (or after) YAv. times. However, in GAv. Skjaervo 2006 thinks that it is possible ~ he uses a "(?)" ~ that one of the verb forms of *srao-* 'to hear, to listen' is *sraoša-* (detailed in a ft. below) ~ indicating how very difficult is the process of decoding the Avestan language.

<sup>2</sup> In YAv. In the YAv. texts, the inflected forms (e. g. *sraoṣəm* (acc. sg.), *sraoṣō* (nom. sg.) *sraoṣahe* (gen. sg.) indicate that GAv. *səraoṣa-* had evolved to YAv. *sraoṣa-*. The YAv. texts dedicated to *sraoṣa-* are:

Yy56 (in Archaic YAv.) translated by Mills, in SBE 31, pp. 296 - 297; Geldner 1P pp. 194 - 195.

Yy57 translated by Mills in SBE 31, pp. 297 - 306 (which Mills subtitles "The Srosh Yasht"), Geldner 1P pp. 196 - 205; and

The Srosh Yasht Hadokht (Yt. 11) translated by Darmesteter in SBE 23 pp. 159 - 167; in Geldner 2P pp. 157 - 162. The titles of Yashts are in Pahl. but their contents are in YAv. In Geldner, under the Yashts, in addition to the Srosh Yasht Hadokht (Yt. 11), he also shows a "Srōsh Yasht" which he classifies as Yt. 11a. But his footnotes indicate that its Introduction repeats the Introduction of the Srosh Yasht Hadokht, and all its sections are repetitions of Yy57.2 - 34, and Yt. 11.22 - 23, Geldner 2P p. 162, two footnotes 1);

<sup>3</sup> E. W. West 1871, in his Glossary to the Pazand text *The Book of the Mainyo-i-Khard*, shows Pahlavi *Srōsh*, which he says means 'listening, obeying', and he shows the Av. as *Sraosha* which is the YAv. form.

<sup>4</sup> Skjaervo 2006 shows the GAv. fem. noun stem *asrušti-* which he translates as 'lack of readiness to listen, refusal to listen.' The word occurs 3 times in the Gathas, in the following declensions,

*asruštīm* acc. sg. in Y33.4,

*asruštōiš* gen. sg. in Y44.13, and

*asruštā* loc. sg. in Y43.12; however, Jackson 1892 §§ 257 - 259, shows that in GAv. the *-ā* inflection (as in *asrušt-ā*) is also instr. sg. for *-i-* stem fem. nouns (*asrušti-* is an *-i-* stem fem. noun, although not one of Jackson's examples). And in Y43.12, I take *asruštā* as instr. sg. (see *Part Six: Yasna 43.12*).

Each of the foregoing declensions of *asrušti-* is found only once (in the specified verse) in the Gathas.

<sup>5</sup> Insler 1975 translates,

*səraoṣa-* as 'obedience' in Y28.5, Y33.5, Y33.14, Y43.12, Y44.16, Y46.17; and

as 'heed' in Y45.5;

*asrušti-* as 'disobedience' in Y33.4, Y43.12, Y44.13.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate

*səraoṣa-* as 'obedience' in Y28.5, Y33.14, Y45.5, Y46.17;

as 'hearing' in Y33.5;

as 'hearing/obedience' in Y43.12, Y44.16;

*asrušti-* as 'disobedience' in Y33.4, Y43.12,

as 'not without being obeyed' in Y44.13.

Taraporewala 1951 translates

*səraoṣa-* as 'obedience' in Y28.5, and Y45.5,

as 'willing-obedience' in Y33.14;

he leaves it untranslated in Y33.5, Y46.17, Y44.16 and Y43.12

*asrušti-* as 'want of faith' in Y33.4, Y44.13;

as 'what might be unheeded' in Y43.12;

Moulton 1912 *səraoṣa-* as 'obedience' in Y28.5, Y33.5, Y33.14, Y43.12, Y44.16, Y46.17; and

as 'to obey' in Y45.5;

*asrušti-* as 'disobedience' in Y33.4, Y44.13, and

as 'I did not obey' in Y43.12.

<sup>6</sup> Skjaervo 2006 shows the following for the verb,  
 "srao-, pres. *surunao-*, pres. caus. pres. *srāvaya-*, caus. desid.(?) *sraoša-*, aor. *srao-/sru-*,  
 ppp. *srūta*: 'to hear, listen to'." The question mark is Skjaervo's.

Kreyenbroek, *Sraosa in the Zoroastrian Tradition*, (E. J. Brill, 1985), pp. 7 - 8, comments that *səraoša-* is "apparently" derived from an *s*-extention of the verb *srao-*.

<sup>7</sup> From the musical *The Flower Drum Song*.

<sup>8</sup> That the freedom to choose is a fundament of Zarathushtra's thought is discussed in the following chapters. *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah; The Search for Truth; The Freedom to Choose; and Differences in the Spirit of Friendship*. And in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>9</sup> In GAv. *sraotā mōi mərəždātā mōi*  
 '...listen [*sraotā*] to me, give compassion [*mərəždātā*] to me, ...' Y33.11, my translation. Insler 1975 is the same except that he translates *mərəždātā mōi* as "have mercy on me". The opinions of various translators in translating *mərəždātā* in this verse (Y33.11), and *mərəždikā* in Y51.4 is discussed in *Part One: Good Rule, Vohu Xshathra*. I follow those linguists who think 'compassion' is one of the meanings of this word, because the concept of 'mercy' (as in a reprieve from damnation) is not relevant to Zarathushtra's thought, in which 'damnation' is an alien concept (except in interpretations personal to a given translator). See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*, and *Part Three: The Absence of Damnation & Hell in Other Avestan Texts*.

<sup>10</sup> Under *srao-* Skjaervo 2006 shows *sraotū* as AorImp. 3p sg.

<sup>11</sup> Under *srao-* Skjaervo 2006 shows *srāvī* as AorPass. 3p sg.

<sup>12</sup> Here are two additional verses in which the verb *srao-* 'to listen' means to both hear and implement what is heard.

"... May the Wise Lord listen [*sraotū*], in Whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking. May He instruct me in His best intentions!" Y45.6c, Insler 1975. Here, Wisdom's listening includes both hearing the request, and fulfilling it.

"Let the cultivator, being one fashioned to save, listen [*sraotū*] to these instructions ... those who are yoked with truth [*aša-*] have yoked their conceptions on the best prize ..." Y49.9, Insler 1975 ~ the 'cultivator' means someone who cultivates plants, and here is used metaphorically for a cultivator of truth, which ties in to the parallel metaphor of the 'pasture of truth and good thinking' Y33.3, Insler 1975 Here (Y49.9), by 'listening' to Wisdom's instructions, the 'cultivator' is both hearing and implementing them, because being 'yoked with the true order of existence' means more than just hearing truth spoken. It means joining one's existence with the true order of existence ~ embodying it in thought, word and action (hearing and implementing). And here again, we see that the path and the prize are the same ~ the true (correct, good) order of existence (*aša-*).

<sup>13</sup> In the immediately preceding verse, (Y33.4), Zarathushtra says, "Wise One, (it is) I who, through worship, shall turn away disobedience [*asruštīm* 'non-listening'] and bad thinking from Thee, and opposition from the family, and the nearest deceit of the community, the scorners from the clan, and the worst counselor from the pasture of the cow." Y33.4. Insler 1975. As you can see, 'non-listening' (although awkward) fits the list of bad conduct enumerated in this verse, in that each is a choice freely made and implemented. Parenthetically, the "pasture of the cow" is a metaphor. In the immediately preceding verse (Y33.3) it is referred to as the "pasture of truth and good thinking". In the Gathas, the 'cow' is a metaphor (or allegory)

for the beneficial-sacred in mortal existence ~ the true (correct, good) order of existence, its comprehension, its embodiment in thought, word and action, its rule, see *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Cow & Its Network*.

<sup>14</sup> Here is Y45.5 in (transliterated) GAv. and in my translation. This verse contains both the verb (*srūidyāi* the infinitive form 'to be listened to') and the noun (*səraoṣəm* acc. sg.).

- a. *aṭ fravax šyā hyaṭ mōi mraoṭ spəntō.təmō*
- b. *vacē srūidyāi hyāt marətaēibyō vahištəm*
- c. *yōi mōi ahmāi səraoṣəm dən cayascā*
- d. *upa.jimən haurvātā amərətātā*
- e. *vanhəuš mainyəuš šyaoθanāiš mazdā ahurō* Y45.5

- a. 'Now I shall speak out (about) what (the) most-beneficial-one [*spəntō.təmō*] told me ~
- b. (the) word [*vacē*] to be listened to [*srūidyāi*] which for mortals [*marətaēibyō*] (is) most-good [*vahištəm*].'
- c. (those) who give heed [*səraoṣəm*] and attention to this (word) of mine,
- d. they shall come to completeness, non-deathness.
- e. Through (such) actions stemming from a good way of being, Wisdom [*mazdā*] (is) Lord [*ahurō*]. Y45.5, my translation.

Parenthetically, in the last line both *mazdā* and *ahurō* are nom. sg. of their respective stem forms, therefore, they cannot be translated 'O Wisdom the Lord' which would require the voc. sg. forms *mazdā ahurā*. As nom. they can only be translated as '...Wisdom (is) Lord' ~ generating a significant meaning.

Here in line c. we have *yōi ... dən* '(those) who give'. In this context, 'listening' for the acc. sg. *səraoṣəm* would be an awkward English equivalent. The synonym 'heed' (which also means 'listening and implementing what is heard') is a bit old-fashioned, but fits better. Here, for comparative purposes, is the Insler 1975 translation of this verse,

"Now, I shall speak of what the most virtuous one [*spəntō.təmō*] told me, that word which is to be heard [*srūidyāi*] as the best [*vahištəm*] for men [*marətaēibyō*]: 'Those of you who shall give obedience [*səraoṣəm*] and regard to this (Lord) of mine, they shall reach completeness and immortality. The Wise One [*mazdā*] is Lord [*ahurō*] through such actions stemming from good spirit." Y45.5, Insler 1975.

<sup>15</sup> The way Zarathushtra uses 'lord' in the Gathas, is one who has attained lordship, rule, over the qualities of the divine ~ in his thoughts, words and actions. The evidence for this conclusion is discussed in *Part Two: The Lords & the Equations of Y31.4*; and in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*.

<sup>16</sup> This verse Y43.12 (which I like quite a bit) is difficult to translate because of its syntax, which has generated differences in translation. It is discussed in detail in *Part Six: Yasna 43.12* ~ its meaning, its linguistics, with other translations for comparative purposes.

<sup>17</sup> Here are the remaining verses in which *səraoṣa-* is used. I start with Y44.16 (a lovely verse). Lines b. - e. are the 2d paragraph of the Kemna Mazda prayer (indicating what the ancients thought of its importance!). Here, I give my translation. The meaning and linguistics of this verse are discussed in detail, with the opinions of other translators, in *Part Six: Yasna 44.16*.

Y44.16, *səraoṣa-*

- a. *taṭ θwā pərəsā arəš mōi vaocā ahurā* ∴
- b. *kā vərəθrəm.jā θwā pōi sənghā yōi hənī*
- c. *ciθrā mōi dqm \*ahūm.biš.ratūm cīzdi*
- d. *aṭ hōi vohū səraoṣō jantū manajhā*

e. *mazdā ahmāi yahmāi vaši kahmāicīti* ••

- a. 'This I ask Thee, tell me truly, Lord.
- bc. What (is) victorious (over deceit) to protect through Thy teaching, the bright ones that exist in my house?
- c. Teach life healing judgment,
- d. then to it let listening [*səraošō*] come through good thinking
- e. O Wisdom, ~ for this, for which You wish, whatsoever (it may be)." Y44.16, my translation.

Here again, 'listening' [*səraošō*] to life healing judgment requires implementing it in thought word and action. Parenthetically in the Gathas, 'house' is used as a metaphor for a state of being (see *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*), and the 'bright ones that exist in my house' refers (in my view) to the true order of existence (*aša-*), and 3 of its component qualities ~ good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta- armaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu- xšaθra-*) ~ the material metaphor for which is 'light' ~ hence the 'bright ones' ~ qualities which man presently has, although imperfectly.

Y46.17, *səraoša-*

Translations of this verse differ substantially. Here is the Insler 1975 version.

"Hither, where, o Jamaspa Haugva, I shall declare to you in verse ~ not in non-verse ~ in total inspiration, and with obedience [*səraošā* 'with listening'], the glories of Him who offers solicitude (to us), the Wise Lord who, together with His clever advisor, truth, has judged the just and the unjust." Y46.17, Insler 1975. Here *səraošā* is instr. sg. ('with/through/by \_\_\_\_'), and there is no conjunction *-cā* 'and' in the GAv. text; so more literally, '...I shall declare to you ... in total inspiration, through listening [*səraošā*] (to His Word), the glories of Him ...' Therefore in this context, 'hearing' (the Word of the Divine) alone does not fit. The very act of declaring the glories of Him who offers solicitude, requires words and actions ~ implementing the Word that is heard.

Y28.5, *səraoša-*

Another one of my favorites. Translations of the 2d half of this verse differ greatly. Here, I give my translation of the entire verse. The meaning and linguistics of this verse are discussed in detail, with the opinions of other translators, in *Part Six: Yasna 28.5*.

- a. *ašā kaṭ θwā darəsānī manascā vohū vaēdəmnō*
- b. *gātūmcā ahurāi səvištāi səraošəm mazdāi*
- c. *anā mąθrā mazištəm vāurōimaidī xrafstrā hizvā* •• Y28.5.

- a. Truth, will I see you, (as I continue) acquiring both good thinking
- b. and way to the Lord ~ listening [*səraošəm*] to wisdom/Wisdom, most rich in strength?
- c. Through His Word, by (giving) tongue (to it), we would turn (around) in the greatest way, those whose reasoning is paralyzed." Y28.5, my translation.

Here 'listening' to Wisdom in the context of lines ab. includes the preceding words ~ the search for truth with good thinking and implementing it in thought, word and action ~ the 'way to the Lord'. And the last part of this verse also shows that 'listening [*səraošəm*] to Wisdom/wisdom' in line b., means implementing the path of truth ~ through both speaking and acting.

Y44.13, *asrušti-*

"... those who, being full of disobedience [*asruštōiš* 'non-listening'] do not pursue truth's care and company, nor delight in the counsel of good thinking?" Y44.13, Insler 1975.

Here, *asruštōiš* 'non-listening' is not simply failing to 'hear', it includes failing to act ~ failing to pursue the true order of existence, and failing to take delight in its comprehension (which is good thinking).

<sup>18</sup> The last line of both the last Gatha, and the GAv. Ahuna Vairya (although not using the word *səraoša-*) reflect the idea that listening to and implementing Wisdom's Word includes protecting the poor, (detailed in *Part Three: The Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo), An Analysis*). That is an idea. The image of Sraosha as the



protector of the poor etc. reflects the allegorical nature of Sroasha. In the YAv. texts, *Sraosha* is often called the protector of the poor, and indeed of the world, and is linked to victory (*vərəθrayna-*). Here are a few such examples of Sraosha in YAv. texts. When reading them, think of the meaning of Sraosha ('hearing and implementing Wisdom's Word) and you will appreciate the allegorical nature of this image.

"The holy Sraosha, the best protector of the poor..." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.3, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23 p. 160.

"... who protects all the material world ..." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.11, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23 p. 163.

"...Sraosha (Obedience) ... who smites with the blow of victory [*vərəθrayna-*]..." Yy57, §§ 1, 5, 7, 9, 11, 33; Mills translation, in SBE 31(Geldner's section numbers sometimes differ);

"... unto the holy, tall-formed, fiend-smiting Sroasha ... the holy, [*sraoṣəm ... vərəθrayanəm ... ašavanəm* 'Sraosha, the victorious, the truth-possessing']..." Yt. 11. 1, Darmesteter translation SBE 23, p. 160; Avestan words from Geldner 2P p. 157. Darmesteter translates *aša-* and *ašavan-* words as 'holy' instead of 'truth' and 'truth-possessing' or 'truthful'.

"...[referring to Sraosha in § 1] ... who guards the homes of Asha [*ašahē*], who battles all (?) the days long and the nights with all the Daevas ... before him all the Daevas turn in affright against their will, and rush to darkness in their fear." Yy57.17, Mills translation SBE 31, p. 302 ~ the question mark is Mills'; Geldner 1P p. 199.

Most of the 'daevas' and 'demons' in the YAv. and Pahl. texts are vices (shown below, and detailed in *Part One: Does the Devil Exist?*). But in the Gathas, the daevas are the old pre-Zarathushtrian deities of his culture, whose priests had turned such deities and their worship into predatory religions.

<sup>19</sup> For example, in Darmesteter's translation, "...Sraosha, who makes the world increase..." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.1, 10, 14, 18, SBE 23, p. 160. The 'increase' here is not in population, but in goodness.

<sup>20</sup> See *Part Two: A Question of Reward & the Path*.

<sup>21</sup> The evidence regarding whether the amesha spenta are allegories or real live beings is discussed in the chapters 1.3 through 1.8 of *Part One* in which each amesha spenta is discussed in detail.

<sup>22</sup> David Anthony, *The Horse, The Wheel & Language* (Princeton University Press 2007) and his wonderful, eye-opening chart on p. 12, which shows all the languages that have Indo-European as an ancestral language.

<sup>23</sup> See *Overview: The Avestan Script: Pronunciation & Genesis*.

<sup>24</sup> After Zarathushtra, many of his followers were given names which reflected aspects of his teachings. For example, here are a few such names of people, from the *Farvardin Yasht*, (Yt. 13) a YAv. text. There are many, many more. The Av. names in English (2d column) are from Darmesteter in SBE 23, (indicating his understanding of the stem forms). In the 3d column, the transliterated Avestan words are from Geldner 1P pp. 189, 191, 193, 195, 196 and reflect the inflected forms (case, number, gender) required by the grammatical context in which these names appear in the cited verses. In the last column, the meanings of the names have been inserted by me (based in large part on the meanings of the words shown in Skjaervo 2006 - but without the translation showing case, number).

§ 97	Vohu Raochah	[ <i>vohu.raocəṅhō</i> ]	'good light'
§ 97	Asho Raochah	[ <i>ašō.raocəṅhō</i> ]	'truth light'

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§ 103	Spento-data	[ <i>spəntō.δātahe</i> ]	'beneficial giver'
§ 106	Asha-stu	[ <i>ašastvō</i> ]	'truth praiser' (the son of Zarathushtra's first disciple)
§110	Asha-vanghu	[ <i>ašavaŋhəuš</i> ]	'good truth',
§ 116	Asha Savah	[ <i>aša savahō</i> ]	'truth salvation'
§ 118	Srira-vanghu	[ <i>srīrāvāŋhəuš</i> ]	'beautiful goodness',
§ 119	Vanghu-dhata	[ <i>vaŋhudātahe</i> ]	'good giving',
§ 119	Frya	[ <i>fryehe</i> ]	'friend (beloved)'

<sup>25</sup> For example,

In Yy57 (dedicated to *sraoša-*), Mills translation,

"Propitiation be to Sraosha, Obedience, the blessed, the mighty, the incarnate word of reason, whose body is the Māthra [*tanum.mqθrahe*]..." § 1, SBE 31, p. 297, Geldner 1P p. 196.

"... self-lighted from within..." § 21, SBE 31 p. 303 ('light' is a standard metaphor for *aša-* the true order of existence).

"...Sraosha (Obedience) the blessed ...whose body is the Māthra." § 33, SBE 31 p. 305, Geldner abbreviates this sentence.

So also in Yy3.19, SBE 31, p. 212; and Yy7.20, SBE 31, p. 226.

In Yt. 11 (*Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*), Darmesteter translation,

"Unto the holy, strong Sraosha, who is the incarnate Word [*tanu.mqθrahe*]..." Yt. 11, Introduction, SBE 23 p. 159; Geldner 2P p. 157.

"... the holy and strong Sraosha who is the incarnate Word." Yt. 11.18, SBE 23 p. 165; Geldner abbreviates this sentence.

"...the holy, strong, Sraosha, who is the incarnate Word [*tanu.mqθrahe*]..." Yt. 11.23, SBE 23 p. 167; Geldner 2P p. 162.

"Holy Sraosha ... The faithful one who pronounces most words of blessing ... The Ahuna Vairya is the best fiend-smiter ... the word of truth is the fighter that is the best of all fiend-smiters..." Yt. 11.3; SBE 23, p. 160 ~ here equating Sroasha (who is the word incarnate, and who throughout this Yasht is a 'fiend-smiter') with the 'word of truth'.

In *Sirozah* Darmesteter translation,

"To the holy strong Sroasha, who is the incarnate Word [*tanu.mqθrahe*], ..." *Sirozah* I.17, SBE 23, p. 9; Geldner 2P p. 261.

Some human beings also are called the incarnate Word ~ presumably those who hear and implement Wisdom's Word (the path of truth) in thought, word and action. Some of these are identified in *Part Three: Evolution of the Name(s) Mazda, Ahura*.

<sup>26</sup> Skjaervo 2006 shows the masc. noun stem *aēšəma-* "wrath". In the Gathas, Insler 1975 often translates *aēšəma-* as "fury", as do Humbach/Faiss 2010.

And Skjaervo 2006 shows the fem. noun *drug-/druj-* "Lie", (although I think 'untruth' is closer in meaning). Here from the YAv. texts are examples of the mighty hero *sraoša-* ('listening to the Word of the Divine) smiting the demons called 'anger' (*aēšəma-*), and 'the Lie' (*druj-*). When you read each quotation, if in your mind you think of the meaning of Sraosha ('hearing and implementing Wisdom's Word) you will see more clearly the idea behind the image.

Sraosha tackling the demon 'anger'

"... who with his levelled battle-axe, smites Aēshema..." Yy57.9, Mills translation, SBE 31 p. 300.

[referring to Sraosha] "Whom the holy [*ašava* 'truth-possessing'] Ahura Mazda has created to withstand Aēshma the fiend..." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.15, Darmesteter translation SBE 23 p. 164; Geldner 2P p. 161.

In a Pazand text, " Srosh ... will destroy anger..." E. W. West 1850 translation *The Book of the Mainyo-i-khard* English Section Ch. VIII, § 14, p. 142.

Sraosha tackling the demon 'falsehood' (or more accurately ~ in meaning ~ 'untruth' is more accurate, because in the Gathas, *druj-* is the opposite of *aša-*).

"... who was the smiter of the Lie-Demon [*druj-*]..." Yy57.15, Mills translation, SBE 31 p. 301; Geldner 1P p. 199.

"... who smites the fiendish Druj ..." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.10, Darmesteter translation SBE 23 pp. 162 - 163.

"The holy Sraosha ... is fiend-smiting; he is the best smiter of the Druj..." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.3, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23 p. 160.

"We celebrate ... the victorious Sraosha, who makes the world increase, (having) the truth-possessing judgment of truth [*ašavanəm ašahe ratūm*] ..." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.1, my translation; Geldner 2P p. 157.

The phrase *ašavanəm ašahe ratūm* and its translation is discussed in *Part Three: Ratu*.

In describing Sroasha ~ the incarnate Word ~ as *ašavanəm ašahe ratūm* '(having) the truth-possessing judgment of truth', we should recall that Wisdom's Word is the path of truth [*aša-*] (see *Part Two: A Question of Reward & the Path*). Thus the incarnate Word (Sraosha), is incarnate truth. In other words, 'truth-possessing [*ašavanəm*]', and having the 'judgment of truth [*ašahe ratūm*]' is having the kind of judgment, (the mental thought processes) that understands and embodies the true order of existence ~ which is the Word incarnate, which is Sraosha.

In describing Ahura Mazda and also revered humans, as *ašavanəm ašahe ratūm* '(having) the truth-possessing, judgment of truth', the same reasoning would apply ~ each being truth incarnate (the incarnate Word).

One might wonder: Why Sraosha? why not *ārmaiti-* which means 'embodied truth'? Well, *səraoša-/sraoša-* ('listening') is the conduct (in mortal existence) that results in hearing and embodying the Word. Its meaning (and the ways it is used in the Gathas is somewhat different from *ārmaiti-* which in the Gathas is the embodiment itself ~ the 'embodiment of the true (correct, good) order of existence in thought, word and action' ~ completely in the Divine (an amesha spenta), and incompletely in mortals (see *Part One: Embodied Truth, Aramaiti*). *səraoša-/sraoša-* is not listed or identified as an amesha spenta in any YAv. text (in which the phrase amesha spenta is used).

<sup>27</sup> The meaning(s) of *cīvatō pərətuš* and the opinions of various linguists is explored in some detail in a footnote in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*, and in *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge of Discerning*.

<sup>28</sup> It is interesting that the YAv. Fragment 22, and the YAv. Vishtasp Yasht, contain a simpler version of what happens to the soul after death. There are no allegorical figures assisting the soul (such as Srosh, Rashnu (Justice) Mihir (lovingkindness), such as we find in the later (Pazand and Pahlavi) texts.

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*In a Pazand text.* In E. W. West's 1850, translation of *The Book of the Mainyo-i-khard*, after death Srosh assists the transition of a truth~possessing soul to 'heaven'; (English section Ch. II, §§ 115, 118, 124), and opposes the transition of a non-truthful soul (English section Ch. II § 162). Looking past the allegory to the meaning which the allegorical image was created to convey, this tells us that listening to (hearing and implementing) the Word of Wisdom (the path of truth), assists the soul to attain paradise (a state of being that comprehends truth); failing to do so, is an obstacle to that attainment.

*In a Pahlavi Text.* In the *Arda Viraf Namah*, we are told that Srosh gave Arda Viraf a guided tour of heaven. Haug/West translation *The Book of Arda Viraf*, Chs VI et seq. It is doubtful whether the author of this text understood the meaning or allegorical nature of Srosh. But if he was repeating an earlier tradition, we can, once again, see the idea behind the image ~ listening to and implementing Wisdom's word (Srosh) gives us knowledge of, and access to, the most good existence (*ahu- vahišta-*) ~ one of Zarathushtra's terms for paradise.