

The Manthra of the Human & the Divine, Yenghe Haatam

Centuries after the conquest of Iran by Alexander (in about 331 BCE), ancient Zoroastrians (first in Parthian times, and then in Sasanian times), collected the remnants of the scattered Avestan texts, both written and what was retained in memory, and placed them in their present order ~ the Sasanian high priest Tansar discarding what he did not think was acceptable, and keeping what he thought was. After the Arab invasion (in about 647 CE), when texts were burned, and the learned killed, what remained of the texts in writing and in memory (that had not been previously discarded by Tansar), were written down and copied and re-copied through the centuries that followed. The Avestan texts we have today, are remnants of these copied and re-copied texts.

These surviving Avestan texts are in 3 forms of the Avestan language ~ the oldest form is Gatha Avestan (also called Old Avestan), in which the Gathas and a few other texts were composed. The youngest surviving form is Younger Avestan, in which almost all later Avestan texts were composed. And a form of the language that is just a little bit earlier than the Younger Avestan texts is called by linguists 'Archaic Young Avestan, in which only a very few (surviving) texts have been composed. The Yenghe Haatam is in Archaic Young Avestan. Therefore we know that it was composed long after Zarathushtra's time, but slightly before the other (Younger) Avestan texts. The Yenghe Haatam is a part of Yy27.15.

The importance of the Yenghe Haatam to ancient Zoroastrians is apparent when you consider that it was placed in Yasna 27, immediately after the two most important prayers in the liturgy, which are in pure GAv., and were most probably composed by Zarathushtra himself ~ the Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo Y27.13), and the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu, Y27.14). And in later times, when the Avestan texts were recited as part of the rituals, the priests inserted instructions following numerous segments of the Avestan texts, to recite one or more of these three prayers (among others) ~ the recital of the 'yenghe haatam' featuring prominently in these instructions.

Naturally, one wonders: Why? Of all the many later prayers, why was this one ~ composed by an unknown author centuries after Zarathushtra ~ ranked with the other two thought to be composed by Zarathushtra himself? I think perhaps it may have been because the Yenghe Haatam contains (almost) the same interplay between the human and the Divine that we see in the Ahuna Vairya and the Asha Vahishta. It is a prescription for living, and relating to the rest of existence ~ a prescription which is foundational, healing (and quite lovely). A prescription which is also implied throughout the Gathas.

Like the Asha Vahishta and the Ahuna Vairya, the Yenghe Haatam is not a 'prayer' in that it is not addressed to the Divine, nor is it in praise of the Divine. It is a mantra. Here, I will give just an overview of it as a prescription for how we should live our lives and relate to others. It is discussed in more detail, together with ancient commentaries on it, in another chapter.¹

Central to the Yenghe Haatam is the notion of worship. Therefore, before starting our discussion of this mantra let us recall Zarathushtra's ideas about worship in the Gathas.

Object of worship. In the Gathas, the true (wholly good) order of existence and its component qualities (amesha spenta) are what make a being Divine. So it is not surprising that these qualities

and the Being who personifies them (a seeming plurality which is in fact a unity) is the object of worship, reverence, praise, esteem and service in the Gathas.²

Way to Worship. And in the Gathas, the qualities of the Divine (amesha spenta) are also the way to worship with each choice in thought, word and action ~ a living worship. This way to worship is called the 'path(s) of truth' which is understandable because each divine quality (amesha spenta) is some aspect of the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*).

Therefore, both the choice of who/what we worship, and also how we worship, are to be made 'in accord with truth' ~ which is what we see in the Yenghe Haatam (*ašāt hacā*), and also in the Ahuna Vairya (*ašāt cīt hacā*) with the emphatic *-cīt* 'indeed, itself', and impliedly also in the Asha Vahishta (*ašəm / ašāi*).

Here is the Yenghe Haatam.

*yejñhē hātəm āat yesnē paitī vañhō
mazdā ahurō vaēdā ašāt hacā yāñhəmcā
təscā tāscā yazamaidē Y27.15*
transliterated from Geldner 1P, p. 98.

Unfortunately, as with the Asha Vahishta and the Ahuna Vairya, translations vary widely and are highly interpretive. Insler has not translated this manthra (so far as I am aware). The following is my translation which I have tried to make as literal as possible, consistent with readable English. This translation does not tug at the heartstrings, the way Taraporewala's translation does. But I think you need to know the literal meanings of the words, in order to understand the ideas its author was trying to convey (and why it is so beautiful, and was so highly valued).

'In the worship
of which [*yejñhē* masc. sg.] and of which [*yāñhəmcā* fem. pl.], among those who exist [*haatam*],
the Lord, Wisdom, already knows (what is) more-good in accord with truth,
them [*təscā* masc. pl] and them [*tāscā* fem. pl.] we worship/celebrate.' Y27.15, my translation.³

Not impressed? Well, withhold judgment for now.

It is readily apparent that the mystery of the Yenghe Haatam lies, in large part, on the fact that it contains four pronouns in two parallel (but asymmetrical) sets:

yejñhē (masc. sg.), and *yāñhəmcā* (fem. pl.)
təscā (masc. pl.), and *tāscā* (fem. pl.)

However, it does not identify the person(s) or concept(s) for which these pronouns stand, except that they are a part of *hātəm* which means 'of the living' or 'of those who exist', ~ which suggests that these pronouns stand for living beings, rather than concepts.

The Yenghe Haatam also seems to refer to worship in an deliberately ambiguous, multi-dimensioned way ~ as the worshipper, as the way to worship, and as the object of worship. Why did the unknown author engage in these ambiguities? What was he trying to accomplish? What ideas for meditation

was he offering us in the Yenghe Haatam? To answer these questions, we need to look at the manthra in depth.⁴ But here, let us consider just the following.

In the Gathas, there is a verse which is believed to have been the genesis of the Yenghe Haatam, and reads as follows:

"I know in whose worship
there exists for me the best [*vahišta*- 'most-good']
in accordance with truth [*ašaṅ hacā*].
It is the Wise Lord
as well as those who have existed and (still) exist
[Insler's footnote: "...the good and enduring values of the lord", i.e. the amesha spenta]
Them (all) shall I worship
with their own names

[Insler's footnote: "That is, I shall worship truth with truth, good thinking with good thinking,
etc."]

and I shall serve them with love." Y51.22, Insler 1975.

The idea here is that we worship Wisdom (who is) Lord, and His divine attributes, each with its own name, and serve them all with love. We worship truth, by being truthful and serving it with love. We worship good thinking with good thinking, and serving it with love. We worship embodied truth by embodying truth with each thought, word and action, et cetera. And since Wisdom (who is) Lord is also mentioned, I would add, we worship the Divine with Its own names ~ by being *mazdā*- and *ahura*- ~ and serving It with love.⁵ Is this interpretation of Y51.22 by Insler correct? In one sense, I think it is. And it is an interpretation that is consistent with a somewhat parallel thought in YAv. texts.⁶

But this verse Y51.22, (which is thought to be the genesis of the Yenghe Haatam) is itself ambiguous in that an equally good argument could be made that the words "those who have existed and (still) exist" refer, not just to the qualities of the Divine, to those living beings who have attained these divine qualities completely, who therefore are no longer bound by mortality, and who, with the Lord, Wisdom, form a seeming plurality that is in fact a unity (the Divine ~ the perfect part of existence). The objection that in Y51.22 they are worshipped "with their own names" is easily answered, as footnoted.⁷

And indeed, the same ambiguity exists in the Yenghe Haatam, except that it goes a step further.

Some excellent translators interpret the pronouns in the Yenghe Haatam as standing for divine entities (the allegorical amesha spenta) who are the objects of worship.

But other equally excellent translators interpret these pronouns as standing for human beings. They see the Yenghe Haataam as a statement that we worship/celebrate all good men and women whose daily actions Wisdom knows are acts of worship ~ actions done in accordance with truth (*ašaṅ hacā*).

Naturally, one wonders: which interpretation is accurate? which did the author intend?

A good friend of mine who is a Zoroastrian high priest, Dr. Kersey Antia, suggests (with luminous insight) that the Yenghe Haatam prayer is deliberately ambiguous and stands for the proposition that we revere the qualities of the divine (the amesha spenta), as well as living beings who have these qualities (in whatever degree), thus reconciling both conflicting views. Based on the linguistics of this manthra, and the earliest commentary on the Yenghe Haatam (in Yy21),⁸ I think he is absolutely correct.

If we meditate on the double meanings of this prayer, while keeping in mind its Gatha source, we see different dimensions of the same thought, blending into and out of each other:

- ~ the qualities of the divine (amesha spenta) in the living as worshipper;
- ~ the qualities of the divine (amesha spenta) as the way to worship ~ a worship that is in accord with the true order of existence (*ašāt hacā*), but which (with the mistakes of beings who are not yet perfected) is still only the comparative 'more-good' (*vañhō*) way,⁹ (and does not yet warrant the rapture of the superlative 'most-good' (*vahišta-*) as in Y51.22); and
- ~ the divine within such (unperfected) living beings as objects of worship/celebration.

If, in the varied circumstances of our lives, we could remember to so worship the divine in concept and in being, in each other, with love, what a difference it would make in our lives. Hatred, prejudice, cruelty, and all the other harms that cause suffering would be unthinkable.

Zarathushtra teaches that the relationship between man and the Divine is that of a friend to a friend, or a beloved to a beloved. But logic requires that we take the next step. If our Beloved Friend is a part of all that exists, are we not all part of one existence? Can we harm any part of existence, without harming the Divine and ourselves?

* * * * *

¹ See *Part Three: Yenghe Haatam, An Analysis*. This chapter contains a word by word linguistic analysis, and discusses the most ancient commentary on the Yenghe Haatam.

² Detailed in *Part One: Worship & Prayer*; and *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*.

³ The word *yazamaide* has been (correctly) translated as 'worship'. But the Avestan notion of 'worship' includes 'celebration' (see *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*, and a ft. therein) and that is how I think the word is used in this manthra ~ a worship that is a celebration.

⁴ Discussed in depth in *Part Three: The Yenghe Haatam, An Analysis*.

⁵ See *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*, for what it means to be *mazdā-* and *ahura-*.

⁶ Insler's interpretation of Y51.22, that we worship each amesha spenta by its own name, is somewhat corroborated in a YAv. Yasna:

"...with delight produced by grace, I call upon the Bountiful Immortals [*aməšō spəntā*]... by their names these I worship, ..." Yy15.1 - 2, Mills translation SBE 31, p. 254; the Avestan words in square brackets have been transliterated from Geldner 1P, p. 66."

⁷ In Y51.22, if "...those who have existed and (still) exist" are the attributes of the Divine, it is easy to see how they would be worshipped "...with their own names..."

~ truth with truth,

~ good thinking with good thinking,

~ embodied truth by embodying truth in thought, word and action,

~ good rule by ruling ourselves and our social units in accordance with truth,

~ completeness by attaining truth completely,

~ non-deathness by acquiring an existence no longer bound by mortality;

All of which is consistent with Zarathushtra's notion of worship detailed in *Parts One* and *Two*).

But if "...those who have existed and (still) exist" are those living beings who have attained the qualities of the divine (amesha spenta) completely, we might reasonably wonder how they could be worshipped "...with their own names..."? Well, as Thieme has pointed out, in a religion which knows no images, the nature or identity of the person worshipped is shown by His name. And we see this idea in the YAv. *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*, in which His name (sg.) is identified as His qualities the amesha spenta ~ the author has Ahura Mazda (purportedly) speaking "...Our name, O Spitama Zarathushtra! who are the Amesha Spentas..." Yt. 1.3 Darmesteter translation. In the same way, if a living being personifies completely the amesha spenta, his 'name' (which identifies his nature) would also be that of the amesha spenta, just as the names of the amesha spenta comprise Wisdom's identity. If he is so worshipped with His names (His qualities), so too would all the living who have attained these qualities completely, be so worshipped with their names ~ the names of the amesha spenta defining their identity. Which, if we go a step further, is one (perfected) identity in any event.

⁸ This earliest commentary on the Yenghe Haatam is discussed in *Part Three: The Yenghe Haatam, An Analysis*.

⁹ The Yenghe Haatam's description of the worship of unperfected beings as 'more-good' (*vajhō*), echoes the two primeval (i.e. unperfected) ways of being (*mainyu-*) in Y30.3 which are described as 'more-good' (*vahyō*) 'and bad' (*akəmčā*). The word *vajhō* is the Archaic YAv. equivalent of GAv. *vahyō*.