

### **The Manthra of the Human & the Divine, Yenghe Haatam**

Avestan texts originally were sung, chanted, and we have no direct evidence regarding when they were first written down. Centuries after the conquest of Iran by Alexander (in about 331 BCE), when texts were burned and the learned killed, ancient Zoroastrians (first in Parthian times, and then in Sasanian times), collected remnants of the scattered Avestan texts, both written and what was retained in memory. In Sasanian times, they were placed in their present order. The Sasanian high priest Tansar kept what he approved of and discarded the rest. After the Arab invasion (in about 641 CE), when on a larger scale texts were burned, and the learned killed, what remained of the texts in memory and in writing (that had not been previously discarded by the Sasanian high priest 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. Based on the opinion of Humbach 1991, I assumed that the Yenghe Haatam is in Archaic Young Avestan, but I have since learned that Hintze 2007 thinks the Yenghe Haatam is in Old Avestan (the form of the language in which the Gathas are composed). So we have an unresolved difference of opinion.

But in any event, I do not think that the Yenghe Haatam was composed by Zarathushtra, because the Gathas, and the Ahuna Vairya and Asha Vahishta manthras, all contain core teachings expressed in ways that are simple (for those who want simplicity) and also multi-dimensional (for those who want an in-depth understanding) ~ dual qualities which are a signature of Zarathushtra's thinking and his poetic style. The Yenghe Haatam also contains core teachings of Zarathushtra, but it does not express such teachings in ways that are simple (for those who want simplicity). It poses enigmas that have to be puzzled out.

However, 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 the Old Avestan of the Gathas, and were most probably composed by Zarathushtra himself ~ the Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo Y27:13), and the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu, Y27:14). The Yenghe Haatam is a part of next section Yy27:15. 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 ranked with the two most important Avestan manthras? 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. And the Yenghe Hataam is also multi-dimensioned although not quite like the Asha Vahishta (ashem vohu) and the Ahuna Vairya (yatha ahu vairyo).

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.<sup>1</sup>

Like the other two manthras (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.

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 good order of existence and its component qualities (later collectively called the 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.<sup>2</sup>

*Way to Worship.* And in the Gathas, the qualities of the Divine (later called 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 (*aša-*)' which is understandable because each divine quality (amesha spenta) is some aspect of, or equated with, truth (*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 cēt hacā*) with the emphatic *-cēt* 'indeed, itself', and impliedly also in the Asha Vahishta (*ašəm / ašāi*).

Here is the Yenghe Haatam.

*yejñhē hātqm āat yesnē paifī vañhō*  
*mazdā ahurō vaēdā ašāt hacā yāñhmqcā*  
*tqscā 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 mantra (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 by the ancients).

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

Not impressed? Well, withhold judgment while we take a look.

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 *yāñhqmā* (fem. pl.)  
*tāscā* (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 *hātqm* which means 'of the living' or 'of those who exist', ~ which requires us to conclude that these pronouns stand for living beings, rather than concepts.

The Yenghe Haatam also seems to refer to worship in a deliberately ambiguous 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 mantra in depth.<sup>4</sup> But here, let us consider just the meaning of this mantra as a way of living (which is quite lovely).

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

"I know in whose worship  
there exists for me the best [*vahišta*- 'most-good']  
in accordance with truth [*ašāt 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", later called 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 in this Gatha verse is that we worship Wisdom (who is) Lord, and Its 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 beneficial-sacred embodied truth by embodying truth with each beneficial thought, word and action, and serving it with love, 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.<sup>5</sup> Is this interpretation of Y51:22 by Insler what Zarathushtra had in mind when he crafted Y51:22? I think it is because we see the same idea reflected in different ways in different verses.<sup>6</sup>

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, but to those living beings (fragments of existence) who (in increasing numbers) 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 perfected part of existence). This conclusion also is consistent with other Gatha verses.<sup>7</sup> The objection that in Y51:22 they are worshipped "with their own names" is easily answered, as footnoted.<sup>8</sup>

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 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 (*aṣāt hacā*).

Naturally, one wonders: which interpretation is accurate? which did the author of the Yenghe Haatam 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 (later called the amesha spenta), as well as living beings who have these qualities (in whatever degree ~ perfected and unperfected), thus reconciling both conflicting views. Based on the linguistics of this manthra, and the earliest commentary on the Yenghe Haatam (in Yy21),<sup>9</sup> 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 divine within living beings (perfected and unperfected) as objects of worship/celebration; and
- ~ divine qualities (amesha spenta) as the way to worship, but which (with the mistakes of beings who are not yet perfected) is still only the comparative 'more~good' (*vañhō*) way,<sup>10</sup> (and does not yet warrant the rapture of the superlative 'most-good' (*vahišta-*) as in Y51:22).

If, in the varied circumstances of our lives, we could remember to so worship the divine in concept and in being, in each other, in existence as a whole, with love, what a difference it would make in our lives. Hatred, prejudice, greed, tyranny, violence, cruelty, exploitation, 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?

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<sup>1</sup> See *Part Three: Yenghe Haatam, An Analysis*. This chapter contains an in depth discussion, a word by word linguistic analysis, and discusses the most ancient commentary on the Yenghe Haatam

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

<sup>3</sup> The word *yazamaide* has been (accurtely) 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.

<sup>4</sup> Discussed in depth in *Part Three: The Yenghe Haatam, An Analysis*.

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

<sup>6</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of Worship*.

<sup>7</sup> Detailed in *Part One: The Identity Of The Divine*, and in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of Creation; A Question Of Immanence*; and *The Puzzle Of The Parallels*; and *The Puzzle Of The Singular & The Plural*; and *Did Wisdom Choose Too?*

<sup>8</sup> 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,

~ beneficial embodied truth by embodying truth in beneficial thoughts, words and actions,

~ 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 also those mortal 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 name of the person worshipped is a way of revealing Its nature. We see this idea in the YAv. *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*, in which the Divine's name is identified as Its qualities the amesha spenta ~ the author has Ahura Mazda (purportedly) sayng "...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, its 'name' (which identifies its nature) would also be that of the amesha spenta, just as the names of the amesha spenta comprise Wisdom's name and identity. If the Divine is so worshipped with Its names (Its 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 nature; which, if we go a step further, is one (perfected) identity in any event, because Its nature/identity is the true, good order of existence (*aša-*), with which one amesha spenta (*spənta- mainyu-*) is equated, and others are components of this true order.

<sup>9</sup> This earliest commentary on the Yenghe Haatam is discussed in *Part Three: The Yenghe Haatam, An Analysis*.

<sup>10</sup> 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 closer to Archaic YAv. and is the equivalent of Old Avestan *vahyō*.