

Welcome everyone. I hope you are all doing well. This is the seventh, and last, Session of the California Zoroastrian Center's Seminar "Liberating Zarathushtra's Relevance". The title of this Session is:

The Celebrated Seven.

I have a lot of good stuff to show you. But because of time constraints, I have put some of it in footnotes. I concluded my last talk with the question:

If you had to capture the whole of Zarathushtra's spiritual philosophy in one sound byte, what, in your view, would it be?

Obviously, there are many 'right' answers. So let us celebrate our diversity, and look at your answers, in the order in which I received them.

Your ideas.

Darius Captain said:

"To me the essence of Zarathustra's teachings in one sentence is:

Use your good mind to determine what is right and wrong and act accordingly."

That's a good one ! It captures many key ideas ~ the search for truth, choice, that we do not reject the mind to achieve spirituality.

Artemis Javanshir said:

"My answer would be: **Communal laughter which would result from communal joy."**

I love that ! It captures that Zarathushtra's teachings are joyful, life affirming, that we do not withdraw from life to achieve spirituality, we engage it; and Zarathushtra's idea of 'communal' is the fellowship of all the living.

Esfandiar Bandari said:

"Be happy, make others happy, and leave the world a better place," adding that "Zoroastrianism's 3 commandments ~ positive thought, words, and deeds ~ are succinct, memorable, and comprehensive. They apply both internally and externally."

Very insightful. I love the emphasis on making others happy, and that our good thoughts, words and actions are of both internal and external benefit.

Dolat Bolandi said:

"My sound byte would be: **The Doorway to Joyful living"**.

That is so beautiful ! And so very true.

As you can see, all these opinions pertain to living our lives. And that indeed is the focus of Zarathushtra's teachings.

So today, I would like to show you a few sound bytes from Zarathushtra and other ancient teachers of the religion, which provide us with a framework for living our lives, and also for answering the questions that have puzzled the mind of man for millennia. Questions such as:

How does 'God' and the rest of us fit into the picture ?

What is the purpose of life; how is it fulfilled ?

What is 'salvation' ? How are we 'saved' ?

What is the way to worship ?

What path should we follow, what is its reward ?

How are 'good' and 'evil' defined ?

It is a mark of Zarathushtra's genius that with *one* word, *one* concept, which he refracts into 7 ~ the way a beam of light is refracted by a prism into the colors of the rainbow ~ he encapsulates every core element of his spiritual philosophy ~ giving us a blue-print for living our lives, and also answering each of these questions.

Are you skeptical? *One* word? Well, let's start with the 7 (later called amesha spenta) and then see what is the *one* word, the *one* concept, of which the rest are refractions. Linguists differ about the meanings of these 7 concepts. But the following are linguistically sound, and they also fit *all* of the ways in which Zarathushtra uses these words. These 7 are:¹

1. The beneficial² way of being (*spenta-mainyu*), which is,
2. The true (correct), wholly good order of existence (*asha-vahishta*),
"truth" for short,
3. Its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu-manah*),
4. Its beneficial embodiment in thought, word, and action (*spenta-aramaiti*),
5. Its good rule, (*vohu-xshathra*), over one's self, and social units,
6. Its complete attainment (*haurvatat*), and the resulting
7. Non-deathness (*ameretat*), a state of being not bound by mortality.

Now, look at the first 2. How do we know that the first quality ~ the *beneficial way of being* (*spenta-mainyu*) ~ is the *true (correct), wholly good order of existence* (*asha-vahishta*) ? Well, because Zarathushtra says so in many ways, including some mirrored equations. He says,

spenta- through asha-

"... the [*mainyu* 'way of being'] [*spenta* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha*]..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 1, Insler translation 1975;

"... such a person, [*spenta* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha*]..." Gathas, Yasna 44, verse 2, Insler translation 1975;

asha through *spenta*

"... those who are properly truthful [*ashavan*] from this [*spenta mainyu* 'beneficial way of being'] ... " Gathas, Yasna 47, verse 4, Insler 1975.

And the equivalence between *spenta* and *asha* is corroborated in later Avestan texts. For example, the *Yasna Haptanghaiti* says,

"We celebrate then truth [*ashem*], which (is) most beautiful ... which (is) beneficial [*spentem*], undying..." *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, 37:4, my translation.³

Now if we look carefully at these 7 concepts, we can see that all of them are aspects of one concept ~ the true, wholly good, order of existence (*asha vahishta*).

The first quality is equated with truth. The other qualities are aspects of truth ~ its comprehension (# 3); its embodiment (# 4); its rule (# 5); its complete attainment (# 6); and the resulting state of being that is not bound by mortality (# 7). And this conclusion ~ that all these qualities are aspects of truth (*asha*) ~ is corroborated by later Avestan texts, which (more than once) describe these 7 qualities as,

"... the truthful ones [*ashavan*]. The seven, who think alike, the seven who speak alike, the seven who act alike. Who have the same thought, the same word, the same deed ..." *Zamyad Yasht* Yt. 19, §§ 15 - 16, Hintze translation 1994.

So if these 7 are all 'truthful (*ashavan*)',⁴ and if they are all alike, they can only be refractions of 'truth' (*asha*).

Which makes us appreciate how important it is to understand what Zarathushtra has in mind, when he uses the word *asha*.

The linguistics of *asha* (which I have footnoted),⁵ show that *asha* is an order of existence that is inherently true, correct, right. So Insler and other linguists have translated *asha* as 'truth'.

Now in English, 'truth' usually means factual truths. But the way Zarathushtra uses this word ~ *asha* ~ includes factual truths as well as the truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ all that is correct, right, good.⁶ In the Gathas, this includes such qualities as honesty, generosity, friendship, compassion, justice (as in being fair), and other good qualities ~ one of which,

today, we have forgotten. Love is also included in the meaning *asha*. And love pervades every aspect of Zarathushtra's teachings (I have footnoted where you can see the evidence).⁷ To give you just one example, **loving** is the word he uses to describe a person who is **beneficial** (*spenta*) **through truth** (*asha*).

"... the loving man [*kathe* 'loving (one)'] ... such a person, [*spenta*- 'beneficial'] **through truth** [*asha*-], **watching over the heritage for all**, **is a world-healer** [*ahum.bish* '(an) existence-healer'] **and Thy ally in** [*mainyu*- '(his) way of being'], [*mazda*- 'Wisdom']..." Gathas, Yasna 44, verse 2, Insler translation 1975...." There is no word 'man' in the Gathic Avestan text.

In fact, so well known was the central role that love plays in Zarathushtra's teachings, that it survived even the massive loss of knowledge that followed the Arab invasion of Iran, although surviving Zoroastrians may not have remembered that love is part of the meaning of *asha*. A Pahlavi text says,

"... The law of Ohrmazd is love of people." *Dinkard* 6, § E45h, Shaul Shaked translation.⁸ Pahlavi "Ohrmazd" is Avestan "Ahura Mazda".

"... Character is love of people, and the fruit of character is love of people. The love of people is freedom from sin; for it is impossible (to imagine) that the demons should cause harm in the world owing to the action of a certain man, and that man should be a lover of people." *Dinkard* 6, § E45e, Shaul Shaked translation.⁹

In the same way, the *Ashirwad* part of the Pazand Zoroastrian Wedding Ceremony says (in part),

"...worship God by doing charitable works. ..."

"...The law of the Wise Lord, the Omnipotent, ... is the law of loving mankind. So do not harm people neither in thought nor word nor deed. When a stranger arrives, give him food and shelter. Protect good people from hunger and thirst, from cold and heat. Be kindly to those under you or younger than you. Respect your elders, ... so that the Wise Lord will delight in you." *Ashirwad*, translation by Shahin Bekhradnia

In short, we do not have an English equivalent ~ not in one word, not even in one phrase ~ which conveys the full meaning of *asha*. So when, in a Gatha quotation, we see the translation '**truth**' or even the '**true (correct) order of existence**', we need to remember that it means factual truths, as well as abstract truths ~ all the many qualities that are good, right, generous, loving, etc.

Now, how do we know what is truth in a given situation? As **Darius Captain** so rightly says, we use our good minds to search for truth, on-going.

Let us now see how this one concept, *asha* ~ refracted into 7 qualities ~ encapsulates Zarathushtra's entire spiritual philosophy.¹⁰

The Divine, and mortals.

First, we have already seen in past Sessions, that in the Gathas, truth and its refractions comprise the nature of the Divine (who personifies the **true wholly good order of existence, *asha-vahishta***); and that mortals have the first five of these divine qualities (imperfectly), and are capable of attaining them all 7 completely. I have footnoted some quotations from the Gathas, which show these conclusions.¹¹

Which brings us to his ideas of,

*The way to worship, the path and its reward.*¹²

As we discussed in Sessions 3 and 4, Zarathushtra tells us to worship the Divine with its own 7 qualities.¹³ And he tells us that the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path, are also these 7 Divine qualities, which he distills into one concept,

"... the path(s) of truth..." (Y51:13; Y33:5) which of necessity includes its comprehension, the 'path(s) of good thinking' (Y51:16, Y34:12 and 13); Insler translation 1975; Corroborated in later Avestan texts in one of my favorite sound bytes.

'(There is) one path, that of truth, all others (are) non-paths.'

aevo pantau yo ashahe vispe anyaesham apantam.

my translation.

Yasna 72, § 11; *Visperad* Ch. 24, § 3;

Post Avestan *Vendidad* concluding colophon.

And this path of truth leads to the reward, ~ the paradise ~ of an enlightened state of being ~ a state of being that houses the complete personification of truth (which is wisdom!).

And one of Zarathushtra's names for (what today we call) 'heaven' or 'paradise' is, a **'most good existence' (*ahu-vahishta*)** ~ which numerous later Avestan texts describe as **truthful**,

... vahishtem ahum ashaonam yazamaide raochanghem, vispo.xvathrem, ...

'the **most-good existence of the truthful**, we celebrate, light, all-happiness,' my translation.

(in numerous YAv. texts)¹⁴

Let us next consider,

The purpose of life, and how it is fulfilled

The purpose is for all the living to grow, evolve, spiritually, from a state of being that is a mix of divine qualities and their opposites, to one that is completely good, that **personifies *asha* completely**. And how is this brought about? Through *asha* ~ an order of existence ~ which includes the law of consequences (that we reap what we sow), as well as unearned calamities (and unearned good happenings), and mutual, loving help, to see us through our difficult experiences ~ earned and unearned ~ experiences which help us to grow, evolve, spiritually. In Zarathushtra's thought, wisdom is experience based. We covered this, with evidence from the Gathas, in Session 5.

Salvation

Which brings us to salvation.¹⁵ In Zarathushtra's thought, 'salvation' is not being saved from damnation in a hell of tortures. Salvation is being saved from what is false, wrong. Salvation is attaining completely, truth, its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule, the beneficial way of being ~ the celebrated 7. Here are a few examples. Zarathushtra says,

"... let that salvation of yours be granted to us: truth allied with good thinking ! ..." Gathas, Yasna 51, verse 20, Insler translation, 1975,¹⁶

"... salvation for the truthful, ..." Gathas, Yasna 30, verse 11, Insler translation, 1975

"... let salvation be granted to the beneficent man ..." Gathas, Yasna 34, verse 3, Insler translation 1975. **Beneficence** means a bountiful, generosity springing from goodness, lovingkindness (qualities that are part of the truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ *asha*).

But in Zarathushtra's thought, it is not enough for us to save ourselves. We have to help each other make it (without interfering with anyone's freedom to choose). He says,

"Yes, those ...¹⁷ shall be the saviors [*saoshyant*] of the lands, namely, those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching with actions in harmony with good thinking and truth, [*mazda* 'Wisdom']. These indeed have been fated to be the expellers of **fury**." Gathas, Yasna 48, verse 12 Insler translation 1975.

Fury, anger, rage (YAv. *aeshma*, Pahl. *khashm*) is the name of one of the high ranking demons in later texts, in which all demons are named for human vices. These demons are the demons within us ~ our own vices.

Which brings us to how 'good' and 'evil' are defined.

Good & Evil

The only 'evils' in the Gathas, are the products of choices that are intrinsically wrongful,¹⁸ ~

lies, enmity, harming, injuring, hatred, cruelty, predatory violence, bondage, deceit, theft, corruption, murder, tyranny, etc. So each time we choose evil, in a thought, a word, an action, we bring evil to life, we give it substance, we make it real.¹⁹ And the same is true of 'goodness'. Each time we choose goodness, in a thought, a word, an action, we bring goodness to life, we give it substance, we make it real. But more than that: Each time we choose goodness, we bring the Divine to life ~ in our world and in ourselves ~ because Zarathushtra equates goodness with the true order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*) which the Divine personifies.²⁰

But don't take my word for it. Look at the *adjectives* he uses to describe the 7 qualities of the Divine.

1. The **beneficial** way of being (*spenta- mainyu-*), which is,
2. The true (correct), **wholly good** order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*),
"truth' for short,
3. Its comprehension, **good** thinking (*vohu- manah-*),
4. Its **beneficial** embodiment in thought, word, and action (*spenta- aramaiti-*),
5. Its **good** rule, (*vohu- xshathra-*), over one's self, and social units,
6. Its complete attainment (*haurvatat-*), and the resulting state of being
7. Non-deathness (*ameretat-*), a state of being not bound by mortality.

Each of these adjectives, is some aspect of goodness (which explains why ancient Zoroastrians called the religion *din-i behi* "the religion of goodness"). And this brings us to a well known sound byte).

How do we personify the comprehension, the embodiment, the rule, of truth. We can only do so with thoughts, words and actions. So if each of these 7 qualities is 'good', we can see where the maxim 'good thoughts, good words, good actions', came from. There are those who brush off this maxim as 'just ethics' ~ not really 'religious'. But in Zarathushtra's thought, the personification of truth which is wholly good (*asha- vahishta-*), encapsulates the Divine, the way to worship, salvation, the purpose of life and its fulfillment, the path, and the ultimate Good End, paradise ~ a wholly good existence, a truth-filled state of being.

We do not know who invented this little maxim. We do know that it was invented, close to Zarathushtra's time, because it first appears ~ in that form ~ in an early text, the *Yasna Haptanghaiti* which is in Gathic Avestan, although not a part of the Gathas. It says,

'We are praisers in song ~ not deriders ~ of good thoughts, of good words, of good actions, here and elsewhere, of (those that) are being produced, and of (those that) have been produced. Through effort in taking a stand, we are of the good'. *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, 35:2, my translation.²¹

Later Avestan texts celebrate this little maxim ~ not only as an affirmation of religious belief (as in the *Jasame Avanghe Mazda* prayer, which I have footnoted),²² but also, as both the path to paradise, and the 'most good existence' (*ahu vahishta*) which is paradise itself. A later Avestan text says,

"The first step ... placed him in the Good-Thought Paradise,
The second step ... placed him in the Good-Word Paradise,
The third step ... placed him in the Good-Deed Paradise,
The fourth step ... placed him in the Endless Lights." *Avestan Fragment # 22, § 15*, Darmesteter translation.²³

The Endless Lights are an enlightened existence. And other Avestan texts describe the Endless Lights as 'self-made' (*xvadhata*). I have footnoted examples.²⁴ And in a Pahlavi text the Divine is named 'Endless Light'.²⁵

Indeed, so well known was this idea of paradise being the most good existence of good thoughts, good words, good actions, that it was remembered even after the Arab invasion.

A Pazand text says,

"And heaven (*vahesht*),²⁶ is first *Humat* (good thoughts), and second *Hukht* (good words), and third *Hvaresht* (good deeds)." *Mainyo i khard*, Ch. 7 §§ 8 - 12, E. W. West translation, p. 140.

In short this little sound byte ~ good thoughts, good words, good actions ~ distills the essence of truth personified ~ which is the Divine, the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path. (As *Esfandiar* said "succinct, memorable, comprehensive". Right on!).

Our dear *Shahriar Shariari* once commented (in an internet posting), that the amesha spenta are the operating software for the hardware of existence. A most insightful and accurate comment.

I would like to conclude with a sound byte from the Gathas that is one of my favorites. In the last Gatha, Zarathushtra gives the following advice to the brides and grooms who were then getting married. But this is good advice for all our relationships. True, sometimes relationships don't work, despite our best intentions. But this is general advice. He says,

"... Let each of you try to win the other with truth [*asha-*] for this shall be of good gain for each ..." Gathas, Yasna 53, verse 5, Insler translation 1975.

What does this tell us?

First, that each one ~ both the man and the woman ~ should make the same effort to win the love and respect of the other (gender equality!).

Second, he tells us to **try to win each other with truth (*asha-*)**. When we are truthful with each other, when we don't tell lies, it builds trust. And we should also **try to win each other with the truths** of mind/heart/spirit, ~ with all that is good, right, ~ lovingkindness, generosity, compassion, friendship, being fair, not injuring, not harming, and all the other qualities included within the meaning of *asha-*. And, you may have noticed in your own life experiences, that when you are good, towards another person, it often ~ not always, but often ~ generates a corresponding reaction from that person.

Third, he says that if we do so, both parties will **gain**. One of the many **good gains**, of **winning each other with truth**, is happiness. In the very next verse, he says

"...**happiness** has been lost to the deceitful who violate truth [*asha-*]..." Gathas, Yasna 53, verse 6, Insler translation 1975.

(As **Artemis** and **Dolat** both said), Zarathushtra's path of truth is a joyful, life affirming, path.²⁷ We see this throughout the Gathas. For example, he says

"... those attainments befitting truth [*asha-*] through which one might set Thy supporters in **happiness**." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 2, Insler translation 1975.

"Do Thou grant the **most happy** alliance of truth [*asha-*] to Frashaoshtra ... and to me..." Gathas, Yasna 49, verse 8, Insler translation 1975.

"... let wisdom come in the company of truth [*asha-*] across the earth! ... with visible help, ... through which he might set us **in happiness**." Gathas, Yasna 50, verse 5, Insler translation 1975.

This idea ~ that Wisdom's path of truth is a joyful one ~ was well remembered throughout the later Avestan texts. Here are 2 examples. The very first *Yasna* (which is in Younger Avestan) says,

"... Ahura Mazda ... sends his **joy-creating** grace afar ..." *Yasna* 1:1, Mills' translation.²⁸

And the Younger Avestan *Visperad* says,

With happiness, we celebrate the Lord, Wisdom;

With happiness, we celebrate (what is) beneficial (*spente*), undying (*ameshe*);²⁹

With happiness, we celebrate the truthful man; ...

And in a state of happiness we celebrate every truthful living being, now existing, and (who) will come into being in the future;' *Visperad* 18:1 - 2, my translation.³⁰

Does that mean that if we follow Zarathushtra's teachings we will never be unhappy? Of course not. What his teachings do, is they provide a framework for living that is not manipulative, fear based, control based; a teaching that requires us to be good to each other, watch out for each other ~ not just Zoroastrians, not even just humans, but all the living, and our earth. In short, it helps us to create an environment that allows happiness to bloom.

We are fond of saying 'Happiness to him who gives happiness to others'. And that may be true. But Zarathushtra takes us a step further. He tells us to be truthful for its own sake. So we should spread the blessings of truth (*asha-*) throughout existence ~ without thought of any return. We should, with our good thoughts, words, and actions, bring whatever happiness we can, to the lives we touch ~ human and other life forms ~ without thought of any return.

I welcome your questions.

¹ All references to chapters and *Parts*, are to my website at <https://gathasofzarathushtra.com>

How others have translated these 7 qualities, and how these words are used in the Gathas (which throw light on their meanings), are detailed on my website in the following chapters in *Part One*.

1:3 The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu;

1:4 Truth, Asha;

1:5 Good Thinking, Vohu Manah;

1:6 Embodied Truth; Aramaiti;

1:7 Good Rule, Vohu Xshathra & Power; and

1:8 Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat.

² The English word 'beneficial' is an inadequate translation of *spenta*, which in the Gathas is used with additional flavors of meaning, detailed in the above referenced chapter 'The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu.'

³ The Avestan words are from Geldner's *Avesta*, Part 1, p. 133 (which is in Av. script). The full section reads as follows, *ashem at vahisstem yazamaide, hyat sraesstem, hyat spentem ameshem, hyat raochonghwat, hyat vispa vohu*. YHapt.37.4.

' Truth then (which is) most good, we celebrate [*ashem at vahisstem yazamaide*],
which (is) most beautiful, [*hyat sraesstem*]
which (is) beneficial, non-dying, [*hyat spentem ameshem*]
which (is) light-filled, [*hyat raochonghwat*]
which (is) all good [*hyat vispa vohu*];' YHapt.37.4, my translation.

So also, in the *Hormezd Yasht*, Yt. 1:22,

"... *ashem vahisstem sraesstem ameshem spentem yazamaide* ..."

"... we celebrate [truth \[ashem\]](#) ~ most good [*vahisstem*], most beautiful [*sraesstem*], undying [*ameshem*], [beneficial \[spentem\]](#), ..." *Hormezd Yasht*, Yt. 1:22, my translation; Avestan words are from Geldner's *Avesta* (which is in Av. script), Part 2, p. 65;

The last word (*yazamaide*) is a verb. And all the other words are in the accusative case, indicating that they all are objects of the verb. The words *amesha-* and *spenta-* are adjectives (Skjaervo 2006). In Av. adjectives can also be used as nouns that are concepts, and nouns that are beings (detailed in *Part Three: Ashavan & Dregvant*). Here (in this part of the *Hormezd Yasht*, as in the quotation from HYapt 37:4 above), *ameshem* and *spentem* are part of a string of adjectives (*vahisstem* 'most good', *sraesstem* 'most beautiful') which describe *ashem*. So in this context I think *ameshem* and *spentem* are also used as adjectives. But even if translated as a noun, *spentem* is equated with *ashem*. Translating *spentem* as a noun we would have,

"... we celebrate [truth](#) ~ most good, most beautiful, (an) undying [beneficial \(one\)](#), ..."

Indeed, the collective term *amesha- spenta-* shows that each of the 7 concepts included in that collective term is *spenta-* 'beneficial'. And all of them are aspects of *asha-*. So once again, *spenta-* is equated with *asha-*.

⁴ *asha-* is a noun; *ashavan-* is the adjective for *asha-*, and is generally translated as 'truthful'. But more literally 'truth-possessing'. The *-van* suffix is used to express possession, in the sense of having something, not ownership which suggests exclusivity. In Zarathushtra's thought, the search for truth is for everyone, and it is incremental, on-going ~ a search from which he does not exempt himself. So even he does not claim to have all the answers (or 'own truth'). I think therefore a more accurate, literal, translation for *ashavan-* is 'truth-possessing' (which in fluent English sometimes requires the translation 'truthful').

⁵ Av. *asha-* is Ved. *rta-*, Old Persian *arta-*, which Insler says derive from the root *ar-* which originally meant 'what fits or what's ordered (in a system)'. And Insler says that this root *ar-* has generated such Avestan words as *arezhva-* and *arshtat-* both meaning 'honesty, righteousness', and *erezu-* 'straight, true, right, honest'. Insler's comments are in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra* (1989 - 90), No. 2, pg. 12, ft. 1, which may be viewed on Shahriar Shahriari's website www.zarathushtra.com. So we see (from the words it has generated) that the meaning of the root *ar-* is a fittingness, or an order of existence that is intrinsically both factually correct (true), as well as, what is right, good (honest, righteous, straight, true).

⁶ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*. In the Gathas, *asha-* is used as the opposite of *druj-* the meaning of which includes what is factually false, as well as all that is bad/wrong (*aka-*), harmful (*angra-*). Linguists (including Insler) often translate *druj-* as 'deceit', but that is only one aspect of its meaning.

⁷ Detailed in *Part One: Love*. In addition, there is a Table in *Part One: Truth, Asha*, which shows how (in Gatha verses) the notion of 'lovingkindness' is interwoven with the other qualities that are a part of *asha-* ~ in the Divine and in man.

⁸ Shaul Shaked 1979, *Wisdom of the Sassanian Sages*, p 215; and a similar statement in § 114, p. 47.

⁹ Shaul Shaked 1979, *Wisdom of the Sassanian Sages*, p. 215.

The Pahlavi word that Shaked translates as 'love' in this section, is *dostih*, *dost*, etc., which in Hindi means 'friendship/friend'. I do not know Pahlavi, and so cannot offer an opinion on whether in these passages *dostih* and *dost* etc. should be translated as 'friendship/friend' rather than 'love'. In the Gathas, 'friendship/friend' is a central

quality. And if we think about it, being 'friendly' is simply an aspect of being 'loving'. And indeed, Zarathushtra describes a person who makes correct choices -- not as 'just'; not even as 'righteous'; but as 'beneficent'. He says,

"... the beneficent [*hudah-*] have correctly chosen ..." Gathas, Yasna 30 verse 3, Insler translation 1975.

"Beneficence" means a bountiful, generosity, springing from goodness, lovingkindness.

¹⁰ Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of The Amesha Spenta*.

¹¹ Here are just a few examples from the Gathas, which show the first 5 of these qualities, as concepts, as qualities of the Divine and as qualities of mortals; and that the 6th and 7th are divine qualities which man is capable of attaining. Many more examples are given in the chapters listed in the first footnote (above).

1. The beneficial way of being (*spenta-mainyu-*),

As a concept

"...the [*mainyu-* 'way of being'] [*spenta-* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha-*] ..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 1, Insler translation 1975.

In the Divine:

"...Him who is beneficent through His [*spenta-mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] to those who exist..." Gathas, Yasna 45, verse 6, Insler translation 1975.

"...Thy [*spenta-mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being']..." Gathas, Yasna 43, verse 6, Insler translation 1975,

In mortals:

"... those who are properly truthful [*ashavan-*] from this [*spenta-mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] ..." Gathas, Yasna 47, verse 4, Insler translation 1975.

"...by the action of the [*spenta-* 'beneficial'] man whose soul is in alliance with truth [*asha-*],..." Gathas, Yasna 34, verse 2, Insler translation 1975.Y34.2.

"The priest who is [*erezush-* 'straight'] in harmony with truth, is the offspring from [*mainyu-vahishta-* 'a most-good way of being'] ..." Gathas, Yasna 33, verse 6, Insler translation 1975.

2. The true, wholly good order of existence (*asha-vahishta-*), 'truth' for short,

As a concept

"... those attainments befitting truth ..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 2, Insler translation 1975.

"... I shall look in quest of truth ..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 4, Insler translation 1975.

"... the [*mainyu-spenishta-* 'most beneficial way of being'] chose the truth ..." Gathas, Yasna 30, verse 5, Insler translation 1975.

"... fame is to serve Thee and the truth, [*mazda-* 'Wisdom'] ..." Yasna 32, verse 6, Insler translation 1975.

In the Divine:

"...the Lord who art of the same temperament with the best truth [*asha-vahishta-* 'truth most-good']..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 8; also Yasna 29, verse 7, Insler translation 1975.

"... the truthful Lord ..." Gathas, Yasna 46, verse 9, Insler translation 1975.

In mortals:

"... the truthful person [*ashavan-*]." Gathas, Yasna 30, verse 4, (numerous times); Insler translation 1975.

"... the creatures of truth, ..." Gathas, Yasna 31, verse 1, (fewer times), Insler translation 1975.

3. The comprehension of truth, good thinking (*vohu- manah-*),

As a concept

"... the attainments of good thinking ..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 7, Insler translation 1975.

"... the pasture of truth and good thinking ..." Gathas, Yasna 33, verse 3, Insler translation 1975

In the Divine:

"... for the very Wise Master [*ahura-*] of good thinking..." Gathas, Yasna 30, verse 1, Insler translation 1975.

"...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohu- manah-*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Gathas, Yasna 43, verse 16, Insler translation 1975.

In mortals:

"... as I continue to acquire ... good thinking, ..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 5, Insler translation 1975.

"... uplift myself with good thinking ..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 4, Insler translation, 1975.

"... a whole lifetime of good thinking ..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 8, Insler translation, 1975.

4. The embodiment of truth in thought, word, and action (*aramaiti-*),

As a concept

"... May there be [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth'] under the rule of Him ..." Gathas, Yasna 43, verse 16, Insler translation 1975.

In the Divine:

"...[*mazda* 'Wisdom] in rule is Lord through [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth']." Gathas, Yasna 47, verse 1, Insler translation 1975.

" [*mazda-* 'Wisdom'] who is the Mightiest Lord, and [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth'], and truth [*asha-*] which prospers the creatures, and good thinking [*manah- vohu-*], and (good) rule [*xshathra*] ~ listen to me, [*merzhdada moi* 'give compassion to me']..." Gathas, Yasna 33, verse 11, Insler translation 1975.

Here Wisdom is addressed, with 5 of Its divine qualities (*amesha spenta*) in allegorical form ~ one of which is *aramaiti-*.

In mortals:

"[*spenta-* 'beneficial'] is the man of [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth']". He is so by reason of his understanding, his words, his actions, his conception [*daena-* 'envisionment']..." Gathas, Yasna 51, verse 21, Insler translation 1975..

"By his action stemming from good thinking, a [*huxratush* 'a good-reasoning (person)'] has expressed his understanding and his [*spenta aramaiti-* 'beneficial embodied truth']..." Gathas, Yasna 34, verse 10, Insler translation 1975.

"...that man, [*mazda* 'Wisdom'], ... who has allied his [*daena* 'envisionment'] with good thinking. Any such person of [*aramaiti* 'embodied truth'] is of the (same) good lineage with truth [*asha*]..." Gathas, Yasna 49, verse 5, Insler translation 1975.

A poetic way of saying that a person who comprehends and embodies truth, belongs to the tribe of truth. (In a tribal society, such as Zarathushtra's a person's lineage showed to which tribe, sub-tribe, clan, family he belonged. Zarathushtra expanded the notion of 'belonging' from a tribal one to a universal one ~ the **lineage with truth** [*asha*]).

Ambiguous:

"Rise up to me, Lord. Along with Thy [*spenishta-mainyu-mazda* 'most beneficial way of being, Wisdom'] receive force through [*aramaiti* 'embodied truth'], ... powerful might through truth [*asha*], protection through ... good thinking [*vohu-manah*]." Gathas, Yasna 33, verse 12, Insler translation 1975.

Here, it is ambiguous whether truth, its embodiment, and its comprehension, are concepts, or qualities of the Divine, or qualities of man that benefit the Divine. I am inclined to think it is all three, giving this verse a multi-dimensional quality, which may have been why it is quoted in the *Atash Nyaish*.

And what do you make of "... protection through ... good thinking [*vohu-manah*]." ? How is the Divine protected through the comprehension of truth? Think about that for a moment (... or 2 ... or 3 ...). It is mini-puzzles of this kind that must have delighted the ancient Iranians who (in the absence of electronic forms of entertainment) loved puzzles, mind games, riddles, etc. as the Shah Nameh demonstrates (see for example, the riddles Zal was asked to solve).

5. Truth's good rule, (*vohu-xshathra*-), over one's self, and social units,

In concept

"That good rule must be chosen ..." Gathas, Yasna 51, verse 1, Insler translation 1975.

In the Divine:

"... the most happy alliance of truth ... that alliance which exists under Thy good rule ..." Gathas, Yasna 49, verse 8, Insler translation 1975.

"... By your rule [*xshathra*], Lord, Thou shalt truly heal this world [*ahum* 'existence'] in accord with our wish." Gathas, Yasna 34, verse 15, Insler translation 1975. Here again, the Lord (who is Wisdom), is not a tribal deity. His rule (of truth) heals existence ~ the world.

In mortals:

"... the beneficent man ... He serves truth, during his rule, with good word and good action..." Gathas, Yasna 31, verse 22, Insler translation 1975;

"... One chooses that rule of good thinking allied with truth in order to serve..." Gathas, Yasna 51, verse 18, Insler translation 1975.

6 & 7, Completeness (*haurvatat*-), ~ attaining truth completely, wholly, and the resulting Non-deathness (*ameretat*-), a state of being not bound by mortality

As concepts

"... Grant Thou to me [*ameretat* 'non-deathness'] and completeness ..." Gathas, Yasna 51, verse 7, Insler translation 1975.

"... they shall grant completeness and [ameretat- 'non-deathness'] to Him ..." Gathas, Yasna 47, verse 1, Insler translation 1975.

In the Divine

"... His completeness and [ameretat- 'non-deathness'] ..." Gathas, Yasna 31, verse 6, Insler translation 1975.

Mortals are capable of attaining these last 2 divine qualities

"... How shall I win through truth ... a prize which is to inspire completeness and [ameretat- 'non-deathness'] in me,..." Gathas, Yasna 44, verse 18, Insler translation 1975.

"... Those of you who shall give [seraasha- 'listening'] and regard ... they shall reach completeness and [ameretat- 'non-deathness'] ..." Gathas, Yasna 45, verse 5, Insler translation 1975.

¹² Discussed in Sessions 2 and 3 of this Seminar, and further detailed on my website:

In *Part One: Worship & Prayer*, and

In *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*; and *A Question Of Reward & The Path*.

¹³ Here are a few quotations which highlight that we worship the Divine with Its own qualities, the translations are from Insler 1975.

"...[mazda- 'Wisdom'], I shall serve ... you ... with truth [asha-]..." Gathas, Yasna 50, verse 8,

"I who shall serve ... you, [mazda- ahura- 'Wisdom, Lord'] , with good thinking [vohu- manah-]..." Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 2,

"I shall try to glorify Him for us with prayers of [aramaiti- 'embodied truth']..." Gathas, Yasna 45, verse 10,

"Yes, praising, I shall always worship ... you, [mazda- ahura- 'Wisdom, Lord'], with truth and the very best thinking and with their rule [xshathra-]..." Gathas, Yasna 50, verse 4,

"...Your enduring worshipful offering has been established to be [ameretat- 'non-deathness'] and completeness [haurvatat-]." Gathas, Yasna 33, verse 8.

¹⁴ This description of the 'most good existence' (*ahu- vahishta*) ~ the state of being that is paradise ~ is found in numerous Avestan texts, which are referenced in detail in a footnote in *Part Four: Heaven In Other Avestan Texts*.

¹⁵ Detailed in *Part One: A Question Of Salvation*.

¹⁶ Insler adds words to this part of Y51:20, which he thinks are implied.

"... let that salvation of yours be granted to us: truth allied with good thinking ! (We shall offer) words allied with [armaitish]..." The words Insler has added ~ "(We shall offer)" and "allied with" ~ are not in the Avestan text, and in so doing, he does not give *armaitish* its actual grammatical value (he gives it an instrumental value, whereas its grammatical value is nominative). I prefer not to add implied words. I translate this verse (more literally) as follows

'All (you) of the same temperament, that salvation of yours, let (it) be given to us ~ the true order of existence (*ashem*) through good thinking, words through which embodied truth [*armaitish*] (exists), the worship of Wisdom, with reverence, (who) gifts support.' Gathas, Yasna 51, verse 20; my translation. So here, 'salvation' consists of truth, its comprehension good thinking, its embodiment (*aramaiti*), and worship ~ which in the Gathas is worshipping the Divine with its own 7 qualities (detailed and discussed in *Part Six: Yasna 51:20*, with other translations given for comparative purposes).

¹⁷ Insler's translation has "those men...", the word **men** is not in the Avestan text of this verse.

¹⁸ In law, we have the concepts of *malum in se* ~ what is intrinsically wrong; and *malum prohibitum* ~ what is wrong because it is prohibited (even though it may not be intrinsically wrong). The only 'wrongs' in the Gathas, are those that are intrinsically wrong (*malum in se*). By contrast, the later texts are full of 'wrongs' that are prohibited, although not intrinsically wrong (*malum prohibitum*). The latter soon become obsolete, as cultures and environments change. That is why the Gathas are perennially relevant, whereas a lot of stuff in the later texts has become obsolete ~ irrelevant in light of increased knowledge and cultural changes.

¹⁹ This Gatha view is corroborated in a Pahlavi text. A word of explanation. In Pahlavi, 'Ahriman' is the name of the Chief Devil. It means the same as Avestan *angra-mainyu* ~ 'a hate-filled, harmful, pain-causing, hurtful, inimical way of being', and the Chief Devil generates subordinate demons ~ all of which have the names of human vices. This Pahlavi text (said to be a collection of the words of ancient Zoroastrian sages) shows that these demons are within us, and that they can be annihilated when we remove them from our beings.

"It is possible to put Ahreman out of the world in this manner, namely, every person, for his own part, chases him out of his body, for the dwelling of Ahreman in the world is in the body of men. When he will have no dwelling in the bodies of men, he will be annihilated from the whole world; for as long as there is in this world dwelling even in a single person ... a small demon, Ahreman is in the world." *Dinkard* 6, § 264, Shaul Shaked translation 1979, *Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, p. 103.

²⁰ Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*.

²¹ Detailed in *Part Six: Yasna Haptangaiti 35: 2 - 3*.

²² In the *Jasame Avanghe Mazda* prayer, we declare our commitment to what we believe, by stating that we are wisdom-worshippers, and what that worship consists of ~ the good thoughts, words and actions that comprise the good envisionment ~ wisdom-worship. (There are no capital letters in Avestan script and I think 'wisdom/Wisdom' is used with double entendre ~ as the concept 'wisdom' and as the deity who personifies that concept and is called 'Wisdom').

Jasame avanghe Mazda 'come to my help, Wisdom'

mazdayasno ahmi '(a) wisdom-worshipper am I'

mazdayasno zarathushtrish '(the) wisdom-worship generated by Zarathushtra'

fravarane astutascha fravaretascha, astuye humatem mano, astuye hukhtem vacho, astuye hvarshtem shyaothnem, astuye daenam vangunim mazdayasnim 'I choose ... and have allied myself with ... well-thought thoughts, ... well-spoken words, ... well-done actions, ... (the) good envisionment - wisdom-worship ...'.

The words *astutascha* and *astuye* have been variously translated by past generations, when the decoding of Avestan was still in its infancy.

Skjaervo 2003 in his YAv. Glossary, shows the stem *stao/stu* 'to praise' (which often is used as the 'praise' of worship in both the Gathas and YAv. texts). And he shows *āstuta-* as past participle of *ā stao/stu* 'having allied oneself (to) by one's praise'.

If (in the *Jasame Avanghe Mazda* prayer) the words *astutascha* and *astuye* are grammatical forms of *āstuta-* then we see a commitment to good thoughts, words and actions ~ as a way of living, as an affirmation of belief, and as a way allying oneself through praise/worship, with such thoughts, words and actions ~ which indeed reflects Zarathushtra's ideas in the Gathas.

²³ SBE Vol. 23, p. 317.

²⁴ For example,

"The endless lights, **self-made**, we celebrate [*anayra raocā x^vadāta yazamaide*] ..." *Sirozah* 2:30 my translation, Av. words from Geldner, 2P p. 267.

"Whenever, O truth-possessing Right Judgment [*rašnvō ašāum*], you are in the **self-made** [*x^vadāta*] endless lights [*anayra raocā*]. ..." *Rashn Yasht*, Yt. 12.35, my translation, Av. words from Geldner, Part 2, p. 167.

Skjaervo 2003 seems unsure of the meaning of *x^vadāta-* ~ placing a question mark after his definition "set in place by oneself (itself, themselves)?" I think *x^vadāta-* derives from,

x^va- 'own' (Skjaervo 2006). In Younger Avestan it is a reflexive pronoun as in 'one's own self'; and *dāta-* < *dā-* (*dā-* means 'to make, to give, to establish, etc.).

I therefore take *x^vadāta-* to mean 'self made'.

Darmesteter (who translated when the decoding of Avestan was at an earlier stage) translates *x^vadāta-* as 'sovereign' in the *Rashn Yasht* and in the *Sirozah*. But, with respect, I disagree. The Av. words related to 'rule' or 'sovereignty' derive, not from *x^va-*, but from *x šā-* 'to have command, middle voice 'to rule (over: gen.)' Skjaervo 2006; and *x šā-* has generated *x šāθra-* 'rule', and also 'ruler' (*dāstū mazdā x šayācā* "And do Thou give, **Wise Ruler** ..." *Gathas, Yasna 28, verse 7* Insler translation 1975).

²⁵ *Bundahishn* Ch. 1, § 5; SBE Vol. 5, p. 4, E. W. West translation.

²⁶ The Pazand *vahesht*, derived from Avestan *vahishta-*, and was a short hand way of saying *ahu vahishta-* 'the most-good existence' (one of Zarathushtra's terms for what we call 'heaven'). Pazand *vahesht* became the later Persian *behesht* 'heaven', but by then, 'heaven' had become a place ~ it was no longer remembered as a state of being (detailed in *Part Three: Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*).

²⁷ Zarathushtra describes his teachings ~ the path of truth ~ as joyful. He says, "... I shall speak of those things which are to be borne in mind ... which things are to be looked upon in joy throughout your days." *Gathas, Yasna 30, verse 1*, Insler translation 1975.

²⁸ SBE Vol. 31, p. 196.

²⁹ The words *amesha-* and *amesha-* are both adjectives which in Avestan can also be used as nouns ~ nouns that are concepts, or activities, or people. The collective term *amesha spenta-* first appears in the *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, a text that is in Gathic Avestan (but is not a part of the Gathas). But each of the component qualities that comprise this collective term ~ *amesha spenta-* ~ do indeed appear in the Gathas numerous times, ~ most often as concepts and as qualities/activities, and only a few times as allegories. I therefore translate these two words in this passage of the *Visperad*, as adjectives, because I think the context requires it, and this passage is close to the thought of the Gathas (as are other golden strands of Gatha thought in the *Visperad*).

³⁰ For those who are interested, here is the Avestan text as well (in Younger Avestan),

§ 1 *ushta ahurem mazdam yazamaide;*
'With happiness, we celebrate the Lord, Wisdom;'

ushta ameshe spente yazamaide;
'With happiness, we celebrate (what is) beneficial, undying;

ushta narem ashavanem yazamaide; ...

'With happiness, we celebrate the truthful man; ...

§ 2 ... *ushtataityacha vispem ashavanem hentemcha bavantemcha bushyantemcha yazamaide. ...*

'And in a state of happiness we celebrate every truthful living being now existing and (who) will come into being in the future.' Visperad 18, §§ 1 - 2, my translation. Avestan words are from Geldner's *Avesta*, Part 2, p. 26. Geldner shows all Avestan texts in Avestan script, which I show here in English script.

The Avestan word *yazamaide* is usually translated as 'we worship'. But in Avestan, it often is used in contexts which show that one of its flavors of meaning is 'we celebrate'. And I was happy to see that Humbach 2010 in his translation of the Gathas and Old Avestan texts, also includes 'celebrate' as one of the meanings of *yaz-* words in his translation. Further details on this point are in a footnote in a chapter in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship* (on my website).