

## Gossip

Zarathushtra within his diocese in the close knit communities of the Gathic settlements of hard working pastoralists, tilling and harvesting in a slow & often erratic cycle of the soil, was deeply concerned about the destructive power of uncertainty. The fragile, precariously poised settled life was often further tilted towards an internal unease. Among the many, but silent ways maliciously employed by some, then as they are now, was the powerful passive force of slander (*Gathic / Avestan - 'spazga'*).

He actively preached ways and means of keeping afar such encounters, which led to an erosion of trust and unity by fostering disharmony and camouflaging truth. It was vital that the frequent ruthless raids by the unsettled Turanian nomads who lived off the hard labour of his people and left death and destruction in their wake, be countered vigorously. Mercilessly, they had taken away the ripe harvests of grains, fruits and nuts, destroyed property and carried away women and children as slaves.

He seemed to be saying, “remain mindful of the fact that the one who gossips to you will also gossip about you and your loved ones, since a slanderer constantly seeks the gleeful thrill of immense satisfaction.”

In **Gatha Spənta Mainyu, Yasna 49.4** Zarathushtra refers to gossip as “*offensive words of cruel gossip indulged in gleefully by doers of evil*”, as if it were “*letting go of the Good mind (Vōhu Manah) while favouring the Evil Mind (Akō Manah)*”

*“Those, who of evil intent, spread hatred through ‘offensive words of cruel gossip’ with their tongues, aim only to seek the evil indulgence of a gleeful longing for personal satisfaction.....in uttering exaggerated untruth,”*

In his powerful composition, ‘**Airyəmā Ishyō’- Yasna 54.1**, which addresses a whole body of ‘brotherhood’ in his settlement, Zarathushtra smites slanderers in his ‘*celebration of Vohu Manah, a rejoicing for the fulfilment of the Good Mind.*’ To this day, the composition is recited by the priest at all wedding ceremonies.

In **Gatha Ahunavaiti 29.1 & in Gatha Spənta Mainyu 48.7** Zarathushtra uses the words *rəmō & rəməm*, which are derivatives of the word ‘*rama*’. He advises on keeping hatred, the Evil Mind’s driving force of slander, afar while holding on to the Good Mind.

**Ardibēhēst Yasht, verses 8 & 11** talks of Āshā Vahishta, as being embodied in the ‘**Ashem Vōhu recitation**, smiting ‘*the slanderous & evil-eyed*’ and in **verse 15** uses a superlative description for the persistent gossip monger - ‘*the most slanderous persons amongst the slanderers*’.

**The Pāhlavi Text, Sad Dār (Chapter 93)** - ‘*A hundred doors /A hundred topics of learning*’ talks about Gossip/Slander.

1. The ninety-third subject is this, that it is necessary for all those of the good religion to practice abstinence from uttering slander (Pāhlavi: *ghaibat*) behind one's back.
2. In the commentary of the Vəndidād it states, that slander is the greatest of all sins.
3. Every unlimited one who perpetrates slander about any one is like him who has eaten dead matter -- and the eating of dead matter is a sin that has likewise been mentioned, before this,

in this book -- but the statement is like this, while they do not indicate any punishment for it in this world, it does not go without it in that other world.

4. Therefore, it is necessary for those of the good religion to make an effort, so that they may guard themselves from slander.

5. It is stated in the commentary of the Vəndidād - when resigning life, thy soul may be shown the sin of gleeful satisfaction (Pāhlavi: *ijza*), by whom the slander was perpetrated. If the injured person were to go before the slanderer and beg for a righteous gift from him, and he provides a righteous gift the sin will depart from him.

## References:

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1 October 2014