

AVESTAN JUSTICE AND THE 'JUST' PERSON

Pronunciations:

a as in **fun**; **ā** as in **far**; **ā̄** (nasal sound **ān**) as in **'āvān'**; **ə** as in **fed**, **ē** as in **fade**; **i** as in **fill**; **ī** as in **feel**; **o** as in **for**; **ō** as in **fore**; **u** as in **full**; **ū** as in **fool**. The nasal sounds are **ān** as in **āvān**; **ən** as in the French **'trés biən'**, **īn** as in **Ahīnsā** (also pronounced **'īm'** as in Sanskrit **Ahīmsā** and as also in Avestan and Gathic languages) and **ūn** as in **Humayūn**. The pronunciation of some consonants (as permitted by my software) are **'ś'** for **'sh'**, **'š'** for **'ss'**, **'r'** for **'ri'**, **ñ** for **'ni'**, **'ž'** for **'zh'**.

Abbreviations:

Gath: Gathic; Av: Avestan; Pah: Pahlavi; Sk: Sanskrit; Guj: Gujarati; Arab: Arabic; Vən: Vəndidād, Ys: Yasna; Yt: Yasht.

There have been ample references in our Gathic/Avestan scriptures and in the later Pahlavi Texts to the merits of being fair, unbiased and transparent in day to day life affairs. The virtuous quality of being a **'Just'** person is taken as being one of the highest ethical traits a person can possess. It is as if he has imbibed one of the attributes of Ahura Mazda - Āshā Vahishtë, which is 'the highest (best) righteousness'. Such is the emphasis laid on this attribute that its possessor would be destined ultimately to become an Ashavan, if he is able to attain Ashavanhood - an exalted state of devoutness, almost of sainthood, far above that which an ordinary mortal can ever achieve. In the case of a ruler, such a noble virtue was indeed expected of him by his subjects.

**Gatha Spəntā Mainyu (Ys. 48.5): "Let those who know how to rule well (Hu-Khshathra),
and not the evil rulers, rule us! Let them rule us with wisdom and skill, O Ārmaiti!"**

The parallel **Gathic/Avestan word** for ordinary mortals who are 'just' is **'Razishtë'** - meaning most righteous, most true, most fair in all dealings, totally unbiased.

In Gatha Ahunavaiti (Ys. 33.1): Zarathushtra talks of the strictest judgement of the soul of the deceased (without favour and in a just manner) of the worthy and unworthy points during life, after being weighed in the balance:

***'In full harmony with the eternal Law of Āshā, which governs the vary basis of life,
shall the Ratu allocate correctly in the balance the merits of the worthy thoughts,
words & deeds against the demerits of the unworthy ones before judging...'***

The Young Avesta:

Razishta:

Din Yt. 16.7 – 'Praise be to 'the most righteous' Chista who gives the worshippers of Mazda swiftness of feet, sharpness of hearing and sight, strength of arms and health of the physical self.....'

Razishtë:

Vən 13.9 – 'Whosoever shall smite or wilfully harm a dog will receive to assistance to the departing soul while trying to cross the Chinvatō pērētu (the Bridge of the separator of the good from the evil).'

This is in reference to the dog, Zarringōsh ('Golden Ears') on Chinvatō pērētu guiding the soul of the deceased own Conscience to help the soul cross over easily. Apparently, the dog makes it extremely difficult for the soul (or even prevents it) from crossing the Bridge if during life the deceased had been cruel to dog during life. Whereas, the dog is helpful in guiding the soul cross over if the deceased had been 'most righteous' towards dogs.'

Sarosh Yt. Hādōkht (Ys 68.3) – 'The most righteous path and desire for knowledge leads towards the shining and blissful Abode of Best Existence (referring to the Eternal Blissful Light of Garō-dāmāna (Pāh: Garōthmān; Guj: Garōshmān).'

Razishtəm:

Mēhr Yt. (10.3) - .’....to those who do not break their given word the most righteous path is illuminated by Ahura Mazda.....’.

Razishtāñm:

Mehr Yt. (10.126) – ‘Yazata Rashnā, one of the Judges at the Chinvat pērētu has been described as the most righteous’, ‘the most beneficent’.....’.

Ys. 25. 5 – ‘The righteous atmosphere, Vāta has been revered as one of ‘the most righteous’ creation of Mazda.....’.

Din Yt. (16.1 – ‘Praise be to ‘the most righteous’ Chista, made holy by Mazda’.

Razishtahē - *Sarosh Yt. Hādōkht (Ys 68.3) as above.*

Razishtayāō:

Vən 19.39 – ‘Praise be to the most righteous’ true knowledge of the holy scriptures’..

Ys. 2.24 – ‘The shining Sun, eternal, brilliantly illuminating the atmosphereis ‘the most righteous’ among.....’.

Sarosh Yt. Hādōkht (Ys 68.3) as above.

Razishtē:

Din Yt. 16.2 – ‘To whom Zarathushtra did sacrifice, saying: ‘Rise up from thy seat, come forward from the Abode, ‘thou most righteous’ Chista, made by holy by Mazda.’

Razishtāō:

Mēhr Yt. 10.27 – ‘Whosoever is destructive by ignoring ‘the most just’ of others deserves the retribution from Yazata Mithrā, who is all-watchful, the all-knowing, the undeceivable, the all-powerful.....’.

Razishtānghəm:

Fravardin Yt. 13.35 – ‘Praise be to the good, beneficent Fravashis of the Righteous, who are renowned, victorious, courageous, and from among ‘the just’.

The **Pāh.** equivalent of the word ‘just’ is ‘**Rāst**’. Such was the fervour with which the Sassanian rulers yearned to remain ‘just’ that they had the words ‘**Rāst**’ inscribed on the Royal Fire Altar shaft [see photo of the reverse side of the coin of **Yazdēgard II 399-420 CE** and **Ārdeshir I 1379-383 CE below** . To read the **Pāh.** script from right to left the reader would need to stand to the right of the Fire Altar and read the letters on the shaft of the Altar from





above downwards). It was a holy symbolic gesture - a declaration of Faith, as it were, with Fire as its witness, which could be readily understood by the masses.

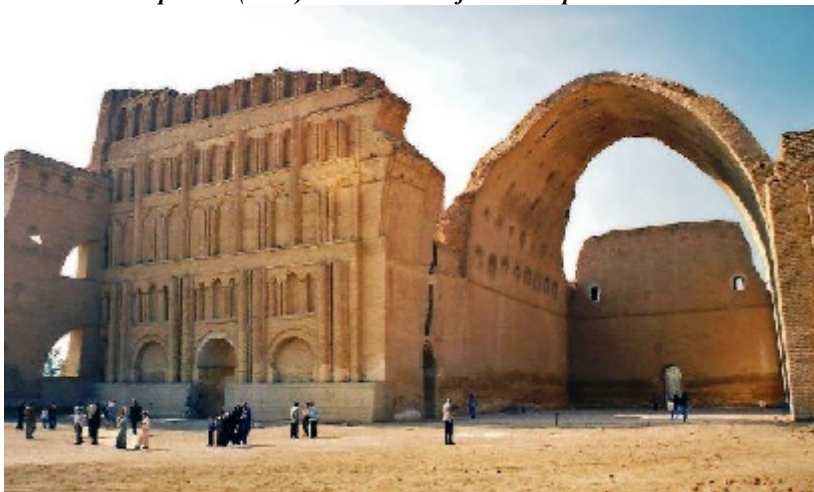
Outstanding instances of just rulers:

Khusru I 531-579 CE

He was titled ‘Anoushiravān ē Ādil’ (the Immortal Soul and the Just) by his grateful subjects not without reason.

Among the many instances when the King’s decision was acclaimed as ‘just’ was the establishment in Gundēshāpur the world’s oldest university, a renowned intellectual center of academy of learning in the city. It offered training in medicine, philosophy, theology, and science, arts and humanities. When Khusru decided to construct a Grand Palace along with a large Audience Hall in the Capital City, Ctesiphon it was expected to be attended by Greek philosophers and scholars, Royal dignitaries and diplomats and students from far and wide. The large area of land required in the blue print developed a hitch when it was noted that a plot of land where stood the house of an old lady who lived by herself would jut into the area mapped out for the Grand Avenue.

This picture (2007) has been taken from Wikipedia website



Ruins of the Palace & part of the arch of the Palace Hall

The Grand Avenue leading to the Palace and the Audience Hall would be partly obstructed by this small plot of land. When the lady refused to move even when she was offered an alternative accommodation the great King ordered the architects, builders and Commanders that she must not be intimidated to vacate and that the plot of land will remain jutting into the Grand Avenue. The backyard of the lady’s house remained within full view of the visitors with her clothes line and some household belongings stored in the yard. An absolute ruler he did not misuse his power against a

helpless old lady, while respecting her individuality and her rights as a citizen. It has been recorded that even the Prophet, Muhammad (ca. 570/571 - June 8, 632), often quoted with pride that he was particularly privileged to have been born during the reign of the great immortal and just (anoush raven e adil). King, Khusru I 531-579 CE.

Such, indeed, was the acclaimed eminence of this Sassanian just ruler. In spite of the destruction over 500 years and the devastation caused by floods in 1888 that followed the ruins of the vault - the Arch of his magnificent Audience Hall, the world's largest single span of a man-made structure (Arab: Taghē Kasrā) and part of the Palace still stands majestically amongst the ruins of the ancient Capital city of Ctesiphon about 30 km SE of Baghdad, Iraq, on the left bank of the Tigris at the mouth of the Diyālā River.

Kourash II – the Great (Gk: Cyrus II)

In remote antiquity more than 2,500 years ago Cyrus the Great was the first human to be titled 'The Great' in documented history. He harboured no thought of forcing his conquered subjects into a single mould, and had the wisdom to leave unchanged the institution of each kingdom of his vast Empire. During this archaic era it was the accepted norm for a conqueror to impose terror onto his conquered subjects, indeed it was an obligation. There was indiscriminate pillaging and burning of properties and crop fields, massacring of the disabled and aged and the carrying away of women and children and the able-bodied as slaves. Cyrus discountenanced such barbaric behaviour. He even pardoned his enemies after their defeat. This profound spiritual insight emerged freely from inside his being to touch others during an age of such cruel upheavals to touch his conquered subjects and thus gain their undisputed allegiance.

His ideas and his ideals: Cyrus was known popularly as the peoples' king. Under his benevolent rule in his vast empire extending from the Indus in the east to the outskirts of Anatolia in the west and from the latitude of Khazakstan in the north to the Persian Gulf in the South there was a judicious treatment of a large diversity of peoples of many strata of life. It involved 20 States with a total of 127 Provinces with security and progress, always, as the main aim. His ideas and ideals of society were later clearly usurped by the Hellenes and the Romans. It is a travesty that to this day, the development in civilization, civil law and civic societies, which Cyrus initiated and promoted on a wide scale, is attributed to the later Romans and Greeks. History, in the true sense, speaks for itself. The 2,500 year old Cylinder of Cyrus with its etched Edict of Cyrus is preserved in the British Museum in London and a copy has been deposited in the New York Headquarters of the United Nations as the first ever documented 'Charter of Human Rights' known to humankind.

In 537 BC he allowed more than 40,000 Jews to leave Babylon and return to Palestine. This step was in line with his policy to bring peace and understanding to humankind. To his grateful subjects it was as if a wind of change was blowing from the east, carrying away the cries and humility of defeated victims, extinguishing the fires of sacked cities, and liberating nations from slavery.

Cyrus's generosity and benevolence made the Hellenes regard him with awe, as a 'just Law-giver' and the Jews as 'the anointed of the Lord'.

Zarathushtra's concept of the 'Divine Tribunal':

This, an extraordinary vision of Zarathushtra, an ultimate Justice after death has remained for much of humankind the basis and a pivotal point of ethical human behaviour, by being carried over a long period of time through into the later emerging Religions – **Judaism, Christianity and Islam.**

The highly valued quality of the Gathic/Avestan society of the early Bronze Age was initiated by the strong and mutual significance imposed by an established Gathic society of '*pāsu-virā*' (cattle, domesticated animals and men forming a single community for mutual support). Thus, the 'just/righteous' position did not reflect in its application to humans only but to all life - both to the animal world (all creatures, both great and small, as long as they were not '*khrafstras*' i.e. pests - noxious, harmful and destructive to human life as well as to the vegetable kingdom). Pastoralists were particularly beseeched not to be cruel (that is, unjust) to their animals and entreated to care for a sick animal with particular kindness. Plant life was nurtured and equally revered and wanton destruction of vegetation was made sinful.

Hapton Yasht (Ys. 39.1) - ‘Praise be to the soul of the universe, its Creator and to all humans as well as to the soul of the animals who live for us as beneficent creatures and also the wild animals, in so far as they are not harmful.....’

Gatha Spənta Mainyu (Ys. 48.6) - ‘....and Mazda through righteous acts first created and clothed the bare Earth with trees and plants.’

Vəndidād 9.2 - ‘In truth, a good Māzdayasnian, well versed in the texts of the scriptures, will fell trees only in one area of 9 lengths of the extended arms within the 4 sides of a square’ (about 18 square meters).’

Vəndidād 16.2 adds: ‘a good Māzdayasnian.....he carefully selects areas devoid of plants, trees or sources of firewood during the necessary clearance for a path, passageway or road.’

On the other hand, it was highly recommended that the noxious creatures (pests), which are harmful to human life - ‘*khrafstras*’ (pests), in fact, were to be destroyed. One of the priests’ professional implements was a ‘*khrafstraghna*’ (‘*khrafstra-smīter*’), a stick with a leather flap at its end (much like the modern fly and mosquito swatter). A long list of such noxious and life-threatening *daēvic creatures*, which it is a merit to destroy has been listed in the Vəndidād. Even to this day in Iran, there is a day reserved during the annual Spring cleaning activities when a systematic search and destruction of noxious creatures in Zoroastrian households is carried out.

The Judgement:

Ys. 43.12: Yazata Mithrā, the earthly guardian of oaths, contracts and covenants, was envisaged by Zarathushtra as presiding over the judgement of the souls of the deceased; for the concept appears in his role as guardian of the covenant, being the judge on humans in this life, so that when the judge was needed for the hereafter, he is the most obvious to fill the role. For the first 3 days the soul is believed to linger around its familiar places until it departs. On the morning of the fourth day after death when the soul ascends to arrive at one end of the Bridge of the Separator (of the good from the evil) resting on the peak of Mount Hara it faces the presiding Judge, *Yazata Mithrā*. *Yazata Rashnā*, the Mainyu of Judgment in the presence of *Yazata Sraōša* as witness, has the *duty of holding the scales of justice to weigh accurately in balance the merits of worthy thoughts, words and deeds during life against the demerits of the unworthy ones.*

Yazata Mithrā in association with *Yazata Sraōša* after due consideration of the positive and negative points comes to a decision and passes the ultimate just sentence.

The crossing of Chinvatō pārətu - the ‘Bridge of the Separator’ (of the good from the evil):

Fate at death was thus of extreme importance to Zarathushtra, as redressing the injustices of life on Earth.

The soul after the sentence has been passed is approached by the deceased own conscience to escort the soul across the perilous razor sharp path on the bridge. A dog, *Zarringōsh* accompanies the pair. It has been recorded that the dog makes it particularly difficult for the soul to cross over if the deceased during life had been wilfully neglectful and cruel to dogs. Whereas, it is particularly helpful in guiding the soul cross over, if the deceased had been ‘most righteous’ towards dogs during life.

Each soul, then, is accosted by own ‘Conscience’ - Daēnā in the form of a woman to help cross the perilous path on the Bridge. Clearly, the Conscience, the ‘Inner Self’ of each person during life is shaped by the person’s own thoughts, words and actions. So, the ‘just’ soul sees its ‘Inner Self’ glow beautifully and the ‘evil and unjust’ encounters revulsion. This concept is very aptly personified respectively as a beautiful young spritely lady who, holding hands assists the ‘just’ in crossing over the Bridge and an ugly disabled old woman, who is unable to assist the ‘unjust’ in the crossing. For the souls judged ‘just’ the path on the Bridge remains broad and safe to cross over to the other end into Garō-dāmāna (The House of Best Existence) but for the ‘evil and unjust’ the path contracts to the width of razor-sharp

blade, which is not possible to walk on and cross over and, relegated, they fall into the depths of Drujō-dēmāna (The House of Worst Existence).

Vəndidād 19.30 ...States the righteous judged soul will see its own ‘Conscience’ in a better light as the figure of a pleasant 12 year old ‘Chairiti’, ‘as attractive as the most beautiful in the land to hold its hand and escort it safely across the Bridge.

“She, the beautiful, fair ‘Daēnā’ of queenly stature, wearing a crown on the head and possessing a skilful, confident and distinguished composure, will appear respectfull.”

In **Hādokht Nask, verse 9** she is described as –

“ a 15 year old lady of fair arm, which she extends to hold the hand and of tall stature and pleasant composure, of well developed breasts and attractive build, of noble birth and of glorious lineage, whose presence, as she steps forward, is felt in the breeze blowing across the mountain peak of Mout Hara at the commencement of the Bridge.”

Indeed, in **Gatha Ushtavaiti (Ys. 46.10)** Zarathushtra declares even he

“would himself cross the Bridge with all who followed his teachings, whether man or woman.”

It is quite judicious, here, to note that the judged soul, being fully aware of its deeds during life and being then accosted by its own conscience, is hardly in a position to dispute the sentence. Such is the enduring power during life of ones own ‘Inner Self’, the Conscience, which Zarathushtra envisaged, that it even comes to haunt the soul of the unjust Drujvant, in the hereafter who, clearly, promoted untruth in life by habitually misplacing his Conscience in order to have his own way in life.

This is well illustrated in **Gatha Vohu-Khshathra (Ys. 51.13):-**

“...the false one puts before him a wilfully distortion of the path of Truth. But on Chinvat pārətu his soul shall, at last, realise this warped untruth he had promoted by his own actions, tongue and his veering off the path of Āshā”

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