



# ***NORTH AMERICAN MOBED COUNCIL*** **NEWSLETTER** **ATHRAVAN**

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## ***Presidents Message:***

In May 2011 we had our AGM in New Jersey. This was attended by 25 Mobeds from all over North America. Meeting lasted for one and half day and still we could not finish the full agenda. I would like to thank all attendees for taking time out of their busy schedule and attending the AGM. I would like to also thank our Host ZAPANJ for making us very comfortable for three days we were there.

*We are resubmitting the article below as it was not published in its entirety - Editor*

## Human Headed Winged Bull Ervad Gustad M. Panthaki



We often see two bulls with wings and having human heads, carved in stone, at the entrances of our Fire Temples. Many of us have wondered what are they and what do they mean?

Historically they first appeared between ninth and seventh century B.C. The great Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (833 – 859 B.C.) installed on his palace entrance white limestone human headed winged bull, known as lamassu meant “protective spirit”. Generally they were placed as a pair at the entrance of palaces. Lamassu bas-relief and statues are shown in museums such as British Museum, Musee du Louvre, National Museum of Iraq, Metropolitan Museum of art, Pergamon Museum and the Oriental Institute Chicago.

We do not find any reference to human headed winged bulls in Avesta or Pahlavi sources; only the Pahlavi sources refer to human headed bull. The Farvardin Yasht: 131 mentions Agreras the brother of the notorious king Afrasiab. According to Greater Bundahishn (GBD) 35:23-25 when Afrasiab captured Manushchihr and the Irannians, Agreras asked a boon of Ahuramazda to save those Iranians. He begot a son Gopatsha. It gets a little confusing as GBD mentions Agreras and his son both known as Gopatsha (GBD 29:6, 35: 23, 25).

Menog-i Khrad 62:30-36 describes Gopatsha as “from foot to mid-body he is an ox, and from mid-body to the top he is a man”, and consistently performs the Yasna ceremony and pours the consecrated water in the Zareh (sea) so that the noxious are destroyed. What it means is that the performance of the Yasna ceremony destroys evils in all forms. It is befitting that Gopatsha is seen at the entrance of the Fire Temple where yasna ceremonies are performed.

Dadistan-i Dini Purshes 89-90 mentions him as one of the seven immortals. Jamaspi mentions him with a slightly different name Ihudsha who is head to waist a man, and waist to toes a cow.

There are two scholastic interpretations of human headed winged bulls:

According to Dastur K. M. Kutar it suggests three progressive stages of man; first ignorance guided by animal instincts, second human as he develops, and third as he further progresses he becomes spiritual.

Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia says that they (these bulls) are depiction of Bahman Amesaspand; the mind, which works at three levels – the sub-conscious is animal body, conscious is human head, and super conscious is the wings. Their presence outside fire temples reminds men to alter their states of consciousness before approaching these great ones.

## A MISUNDERSTANDING CLARIFIED

Dear Respected Mobeds:

The location was, the Medicinal Research Review, 2009, the site was a paper published by Professor Hanus of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, on the subject of Therapeutic Secrets of Plant and Brain Hallucinogens. In this paper, in a section that described “The Natural history of Cannabis” some highly offensive and erroneous statements were made about prophet Zarathushtra. This paper was brought to our attention by Mr. Amalsad.

In a letter sent to Professor Hanus on behalf of NAMC we responded to his remarks as follows. Prof. Hanus stated: “The Persian Zend-Avesta is closely related to the Indian Vedas.”

NAMC response: This statement is completely false. While there is similarity in the metric (poetic) composition of Gathas, and the Vedas, the Gathas are NOT Zand–Avesta. They were orally transmitted for some 2000 years before they were committed to writing. Zand-Avesta are the Pahlavi commentaries with Pahlavi translations of Avesta that were composed in 5th and 6th centuries C.E. in Sasanian times, nearly 2000 years after the time of the Prophet and has no similarity with the Vedas.

Prof. Hanus stated: “The Persian prophet Zarathustra (Zoroaster, ca. 1,200 BCE), purported author of the Zend-Avesta, was a user of bhanga (hemp).”

NAMC response: This statement is not only fallacious but is highly offensive. Firstly Zarathushtra was NOT the author of Zand-Avesta. He had long departed into Eternity, when Zand Avesta was composed in the Sasanian era. Secondly there is not a shred of evidence in Gathic text of the Prophet, to support that Zarathushtra was the user of bhanga. In fact the word bhanga does not appear in his Hymns in any shape or form. Zarathushtra passionately teaches that the Good Mind (Vohu Manah) is a Divine gift to mankind, and must be pristinely preserved.

The concept of Good Mind elaborated by Zarathushtra, is central to the core of existence. To use any mind-altering intoxicants would be to abuse this gift of God. It would impair human ability to search for Truth and Right, with reason and intelligence, and is in direct violation of Zarathushtra's teachings.

Prof. Hanus stated: Din Yasht 16.15 reads:

.....Vohu banghem isemna ashavanem Zarathushtrem

NAMC response: Havovi.....wishing that the Holy Zarathushtra would give her his good narcotic –Darmesteter translation

Havovi....learned in good religious lore desiring (to follow) the righteous Zarathushtra  
-Ervad Sethna translation

Here we see a case where one scholar translates the words Vohu banghem as ‘good narcotic’ while the other interprets the same, as ‘good religious lore’. We believe, that these early religious texts often use words allegorically and has more than one level at which they can be interpreted. Avestan dictionary by Kanga gives the meaning of bangha as luster, religious lore, whereas, banghem is interpreted as a medicine used to procure abortion. This clearly reveals the two levels of understanding of the same term.

Upon receiving NAMC response, Prof. Hanus swiftly looked into the matter and wrote back to us stating, “I sincerely apologize hurting your religious feelings.” And further stating that in writings of Eliade (a religious source) “he found no evidence that Zarathustra used cannabis”. Since the paper was in a scientific review journal, Prof Hanus had reservations if the journal would address a religious issue. Despite that he promised to send our letter to the Editor of Medicinal Research Reviews.

This successfully cleared the misunderstanding of an aspect of Zarathushti religious history for a non-zarathushti laity.

Er. Jehan Bagli

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