



## FIVE GAH Presentations

### HĀVAN GĀH

PRESENTATION NAMC MEETING (MAY 2008)

I studied the writings of a few luminaries for this presentation: Dastur Khurshed Shapoorji Daboo, Dastur Nowroze Minochehr Homji, Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga, Tehmurasp Sethna and James Darmesteter. The last three have made translation of the GĀH verbatim and there is a commonality amongst their work. Dastur Minochehr Homji gives philosophical interpretation as is his style. Dastur Daboo takes a very different approach in that he follows scholar Sohrab Balsara who in the translation of Nirangeestan has made a comparison of GĀHs with five stages of evolution of a soul in attainment of a spiritual life.

Daboo quotes three words from the Gathas: Ushao, Arem Pithva and Kshapa. This is a reference to Ushtavad Gatha - Line 4, Paragraph 5 of Yasna Ha 44: **"Ke ya ushao arem-pithwa khashapacha"**. As per him there is mention of only three GĀHs in the Gathas – Ushao=Bamdad, Arem Pithva=noon, middle of the day and Kshapa=night. He translates the line as "Who except you will bring the different changes in the day - Sparkling dawn, hot mid day and dark night?" Does that mean that the other two GĀHs i.e. Hāvan and Ujiran were added later? He attributes this explanation to the poetic composition of the Gathas in which the other portions of the day i.e. the morning and evening are left out.

Dastur Daboo asserts that names like Hāvan and Ushahin have not been primarily selected to identify different times of the day but indicate progressive stages of soul's journey for attainment of final spirituality; Hāvan GĀH being the second stage of the soul in its journey toward excellence. He explains that during this stage the soul fights to conquer, defeat, and surmount personal traits, feelings, vices like greed, lust, anger, revenge, pride, hatred. He concludes that at the end of this stage the soul would overcome selfishness, shelve personal motives and would start thinking about the well being of others i.e. the world.

Dastur Minochehr-Homji also considers Hāvan as the spiritual stage, i.e. second of the five stages of the soul, in its evolutionary journey towards perfection. This explanation sounds logical as we see in the main core of this prayer i.e. Paragraph 5 of Hāvan GĀH: **Hāvanim asHāvanem ashahe ratum yazamaide; Haurvatatem asHāvanem ashahe ratum yazamaide; Ameretatem asHāvanem ashahe ratum yazamaide;** We praise Hāvan, followed by Haurvatat, the ideal concept of Mazda's perfection i.e. universality and ending with Ameretat the ideal concept of Ahura's eternity i.e. immortality.

Where as Daboo and Minochehr-Homji consider Ushahin as the first stage of soul's journey to salvation Ervad Marzban Hathiram considers Ushahin as the last stage of salvation and Hāvan as the first stage. Hathiram interprets that in man's haste to commence his cosmic journey, full of enthusiasm, he makes mistakes and often takes the wrong path. Savangh collects the good and bad deeds for future use. Vis is the compassionate, the merciful who through love guides man away from evil, giving gentle lessons on the way.

Dastur Minochehr-Homji interprets Hāvan as development stage of the soul. He considers Saavanghi Visya, the enlightened advancement of the soul as the associate accompaniment of Hāvan and reveres the prayer expounding the precious sublimity of the mind that apprehends truth. May this prayer afford



moral courage to the devotee; give him triumph over the forces of darkness; render him averse to malice and hatred, help him cross over life's obstacles and hurdles. He ends by stating that besides the gospels of the five Gathas, this prayer is excellent, and redeems the soul.

The prayer that is praised refers to the sentence: "**Airyamanem ishim asHāvanem ashahē ratum yazamaide**".

Kanga relates to Airyamana as Yasna Ha 54, called "Ā Airyemā Ishyo". You may recall that only half the portion of this Hā is recited as a benediction during the Ashirwad ceremony. He explains that Airyamana is the name of the yazata, too: powerful, victorious, keeping away from hatred; overcoming and removing all afflictions. He is the angel presiding over peace, happiness and comradeship, and is the yazata giving ease and comfort by driving away the false notions from the mind regarding magic and witchcraft.

Thus we see that during this stage in order to progress further and higher the soul is struggling to overcome personal traits that have disparaging effect. In this fight it is helped by "Ā Airyemā Ishyo" prayer that has calming effect and brings constructive attributes.

In the last paragraph of the GĀH we recite "**Mithrem vouru-gaoyaoitim hazangra-gaoshem, baevare-chashmanem, aokhtonāmanem yazatem yazamaide**". Kanga praises Meher Yazata of wide pastures whose power of hearing are as sharp as or is equal to thousand ears and whose power of vision is as powerful as ten thousand eyes. Minochehr-Homji views Mithra as the universal, cementing bond of law-light-love and just dealings with men, Ahurās's power that is man's vigilance, of widespread fame for its noble aim and instruction, offering unalloyed joy to its selfless devotees.

## **Second (Biji) Hāvan**

**Dasa anathra maongho jayan dva hanmin (taeya henti)**  
**[Hapta hanti hanmino maongha, panch jayan askare]**  
**Taeya henti sareta aapo, sareta jemo, sareta urvarayao**  
**[Ada jimahe maidim, ada jimahe jaredaem]**  
**Ada ज्याoschit pairi-pataiti, ada fraettem voighnanam**  
(Para 4, Fargarad 1 of Vendidad)

Tehmurasp Sethna translates this as that in the Aryana country for ten months is winter, two of the warmest season of the year, seven are summer months, five for winter known far and wide. That water is cold, land is cold, trees cold, here in the middle of winter, here in the heart of winter, here during the cold of winter snow falls round about, and here there is most distress.

For the five months from Māh Avan, Roz Hormuzd up to Vahishtoisht Gatha, the hours of Rapithvin GĀH are considered as Second Hāvan. For the remaining seven months i.e. from Māh Fravardin, Roz Hormazd, to Māh Meher, Roz Aneran, all five GĀHs are accounted and recited. As per Ervad Kanga, the reason is during these five months, according to original calculation, of winter, hours during the day-time are shorter than those of summer months. Moreover during winter there is less heat during noon time. The Rapithvin GĀH pertaining to summer season therefore is discarded. In the Persian Rivayat it is figuratively written that heat during these winter days is buried underneath the earth.



Even today if one enquires from people in Iran as to which are the warmest months they will say “2 – Amordad and Sharivar. And for seven months of summer the days are longer than five months of winter.”

**Order of Precedence.** If we look at the compilation of any version of Khordeh Avesta that is currently in use the five GĀHs are placed before the Neyayeshes. However, it is interesting to note that in Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga’s Translated and Transliterated into English, Second Edition, 1372 Y.Z. - 2002 version of Khordeh Avesta the GĀHs follow the Neyayeshes. It is so even in his Gujarati version Khordeh Avesta.

**Shehenshahi and Kadmi Version.** There is a difference in composition of Neyayeshes and other prayers in Shehenshahi and Kadmi Khordeh Avesta. However, GĀHs are identical in both versions.

#### Reference:

1. Athravanano Dini Prakash – 1952. A collation of articles on religious topics written in Gujarati by Dastur Khurshed Shapurji Daboo in Jame Jamshed under the name “Khurshed”.
2. My Prayer Guide, 1979, by Dastur Nowroze D. Minochehr-Homji
3. Khordeh Avesta, Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga, Translated and Transliterated in English, Second Edition, 1372 Y.Z.-2002
4. Vendidad, English Version by Tehmurasp Rustomji Sethna, 1977
5. Ervad Marzban Hathiram – Website



## **RAPITHWIN, A 58.33% PART-TIME GĀH!**

By Ervad Soli P. Dastur

“There is clear religious reason for the honour accorded to Rapithwin, who is more than merely lord of a recurrent season and a division of the day. He is the lord also of ideal lime. In the meenog world of Ohrmazd's creation, before the inrush of Ahriman, time stood still at noonday, that is, at Rapithwin (9) and Ohrmazd himself, having put on 'a white garment ... the garb of priesthood' (10) 'performed with the six Amahraspands the meenog yasna ceremony during Rapithwin Gah, and in performing the yasna created all creation' (11). And he infused the wisdom of all-knowledge into men, and bade them choose whether or not to be born into the getig world to contend against the druj (12). It was still Rapithwin Gah when they made their choice; and it was in Rapithwin Gah, Ruz Ohrmazd, Māh Farvardin, that Ahriman attacked. (13)”

[Late Prof. Mary Boyce, Rapithwin, No Ruz, and the Feast of Sade, pp.201-215, Pratiḍānam, Indian, Iranian and Indo-European Studies Presented To Franciscus Bernardus Jacobus Kuiper, On His Sixtieth Birthday, Edited by J. C. Heesterman, G. H. Schokker, V. I. Subramonium, 1968 Mouton, The Hague – Paris. (abbreviated to PMB).

The above para is from the Greater Bundahishn III 3, 23, Translation by Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria, From digital edition copyright © 2002 by Joseph H. Peterson.]

Part I – Rapithwin in our Religious Scriptures.

8.

avat vyākhnemcha hañjamanemcha ýat asti ameshanām speñtanām.  
bareshnvô avanghe ashnô kheematem, zañtumahe rathwô ýasnâicha vahmâicha, zañtumemcha  
ashavanem ashahe ratûm ýazamaide.

9.

ashem vahisitem âtremcha ahurahe mazdāo puthrem ýazamaide!

(8) To invoke the Lord of Zantum (the province) and to sing (his) praises; the assembly and congregation of the Ameshaspands, which is made in the height of the sky we remember (them). We praise the lord of the righteousness, holy Zantuman.

(9) We praise Ardibehst and the purifying Fire of Hormazd.

[Joseph Peterson's: [www.avesta.org](http://www.avesta.org) (abbreviated to JPW)  
and Kangaji English Khordeh Avesta (abbreviated to KEK)]

Part II – Rapithwin in our Daily Rapithwin Gāh

In an Ātash-Bahrām Rapithwin must be welcomed by the celebration of a yasna in his honour at noon on Roz Ohrmazd, for until this has been done it is not proper for the priests to perform the boy dādan ceremony in his gāh, which is now restored to its proper place among the other four (34). Further, during the first three days of the season of Rapithwin the Ātash-Bahrām priests devote his gāh wholly to his honour, and it is not proper for them to perform any ceremonies or ritual duties then, other than boy dādan which are not consecrated for his sake.(35)

On Roz Ohrmazd the Ātash-Bahrām priests, who are all of necessity with barashnom,



perform the greater khub as a preparatory ceremony in the Hāvan Gāh.(36) Then at noon they celebrate the yasna of Rapithwin, with the khshnuman of Ardibihisht, and with a barsom of 15 tāys (now unique to this ceremony). In the bāj portions of this yasna, i.e. Y. III-VIII, only Rapithwin is invoked of the five gāhs, and that other ratu, rathwo berezato, is also not summoned.(37). Since it is essential that all Zoroastrians should welcome Rapithwin, this first yasna is always celebrated in the name of 'the whole community' (hame anjoman); but although it is sufficient for a behdin to have the ceremony performed for him, every bājgir priest, i.e. every qualified priest, must take part himself (38); for no priest has the 'amal' of Rapithwin unless he has done so.

The jashn day of Rapithwin, celebrated by the other priests and by the laity, is Ruz Ardibihisht. The yasna of Rapithwin is performed by a zot and rāthwi for that day at noon; in Navsāri other priests with the greater khub frequently join them as ham-shariks in the dar-i mihr for the celebration of the yasna of Rapithwin at noon. This again is recited with the khshnuman of Ardibihisht, for the sake of hame anjoman.

After the yasna, either the zot or the rāthwi recites the bāj of Rapithwin, consecrated with 4 daruns (sacred breads), with the khshnuman of Ardibihisht. This too is celebrated as a pāw-mahal or 'inner liturgical' ceremony; but apart from the fact that it again is offered for the sake of hame Anjoman, many families share in it by asking their own priests to put a bāj for them before the celebrant, i.e. a covered bowl containing 4 daruns, and fruits. (45) The bowls are half-uncovered during the ceremony, so that their contents may be duly consecrated (yashte, Gujarati dharāyli). The celebrant makes chāshni only from the 4 ceremonial daruns immediately before him; but after the ceremony the bowls are carried away by the family priests for chāshni in the various homes. (46)

After the celebration of the yasna and bāj every priest who can comes to the hall of the dar-i mihr for the celebration of the jashn of Rapithwin. Here the jashn of Rapithwin has been celebrated annually for over 800 years. (47) For it the priests are dressed in the full white garments of the 'outer liturgical' ceremonies.

The zot begins the ceremony by reciting the Pazand dibāche of the Āfrinagān of Rapithwin, with the khshnuman of Ardibihisht. When he reaches the final words khesh pirozgar bād he stretches out his hands to the other priests, who respond by saluting him with both hands raised to the forehead, and saying these words with him.(50) All then recite together the Avestan Āfrinagān-i Rapithwin. This is the only occasion in the whole religious year when all the priests join together in reciting an Āfrinagān. The zot then recites alone, in bāj, the second Pazand dibāche, with the khshnuman of Dahmān. (51) Again, however, as he reaches the final khesh pirozgar bād he stretches out his hands to the company, who join him with these words in bāj, and then recite with him aloud the Avesta of the Āfrinagān-i Dahmdn. There follows in the same manner the third Pazand dibāche with the khshnuman of Srosh. and the Avestan Āfrinagān-i Srosh. (52)

The whole company then rises to its feet except the zot, who still seated begins the recital of the Pazand Afrin-i Rapithwin, with its moving commemoration of the great ones of Zoroastrian history, from Vishtāspa down to the Sasanian Kavād." With each name come the words hamāzor ... bād. and as the zot recites, the rāthwi performs the ceremony of hamāzor, that is, he exchanges with each priest on the carpet this gravely beautiful ritual salutation. In it the two men, facing each other, utter together the words hamāzor hamā asho bed "Be ye wholly strong, wholly just".(54) At hamāzor each man takes the other's right hand between the palms of his own, at hamā ash6 the left, and at bed they raise the tips of their fingers, palms together, to the forehead in a graceful gesture of mutual salutation.(55).

Part III – The Ceremonies of Rapithwin Eejwāni



Rapithwin, lord or ratu of the noonday heat and of the seven months of summer, belongs evidently to the ancient Iranian world, when the year was divided by the festivals of the gāhānbārst rather than by a calendar of months and days, with four equally divided seasons.(1). The summer over which Rapithwin rules begins on the first day after the gāhānbār of Hamaspathmaedaya, and ends on the last day of that of Ayāthrima, at the time of driving cattle home to their winter quarters. During this sea-son, 'when Rapithwin is above the ground (2) he gives warmth to the world, and 'ripens the fruit of the trees' (3). As Ayāthrima ends, the demon of winter, one of the chief commanders of the Devil,(4) invades the world, to rule it for the next five months; and Rapithwin retreats below the earth (5) where he keeps the waters warm so that the tree-roots do not die. (6). During the day following Hamaspathmaedaya, winter, whose force has been waning, in turn retreats, until in his own gāh, lasting from noonday till mid-afternoon (7) Rapithwin again becomes master of the earth, to be welcomed and honoured once more. (PMB)

The above three parts gives a glimpse of the importance of Rapithwin given by our learned fore fathers.

Let us now turn our attention to Part II – Rapithwin Gāh Prayer.

A quick enumeration of all the deities invoked in this Gāh would be the starting point. They are in order of their invocation:

1. Rapithwin itself
2. The five Gathas, Ahunavaiti, Ushtavaiti, Spenta Mainyu, Vohukhshathra, and Vahishtoish
3. Frādat fshu (rest time for the cattle)
4. Zantuma, the lord of the town
5. Fshusho Mānthra (Yasna 58) the righteous prayer of Thought-provoking Prosperity
6. the truthfully spoken word; the truthfully spoken sayings, victorious, Daeva smiting.
7. the waters and the Earth and the plants
8. the spiritual Ashavan Yazatas, conferring good
9. the Ashavan Amesha Spentas, the Bountiful Immortals.
10. the Ashavan, good, powerful, holy Fravashis;
11. the peak of Asha Vahishta who is of great Mānthra, of great operation, of great fidelity, of great performance, of great effect in spreading the Mazdayasnian religion.
12. the assembly and meeting of the Amesha Spentas when they visit the heights of Heaven, to worship and praise the master Zantuma, the Lord of the town
13. the Ashavan Zantuma, the master of Asha.
14. Asha Vahishta, and Ātar, the son of Ahura Mazda!

Let us try to understand and speculate and may be explain why we invoke the above 14 deities in Rapithwin Gāh?

1. Rapithwin is self explanatory.

2. The five Gathas, Ahunavaiti, Ushtavaiti, Spenta Mainyu, Vohukhshathra, and Vahishtoish  
This may be because Rapithwin closely follows the very holy 5 days of Gathas during the Hamaspathmaedaya gāhānbār!

3. Frādat fshu (rest time for the cattle)

I have spent whole month of May in Udwada last year, the hottest time of the year, and I can picture in



front of our bungalow the town cattle resting in the mid-day sun. How true this is throughout the centuries!

4. Zantuma, the lord of the town

This is the progression of the division of the society into five groups, starting with Nmāna = home in Ushahin Gāh, Visya = clan in Hāvan Gāh, Zantuma = City in Rapithwin Gāh, Dakhyuma = country in Uzirin Gāh, and frādat vispānm huzyāite = for the prosperity of all the living creatures – whole world in the Aiwisruthrem Gāh.

5. Fshusho Mānthra (Yasna 58) the righteous prayer of Thought-provoking Prosperity

It is a beautiful prayer asking for protection from Amesha Spentas, Ahura Mazda, etc. Why it is invoked in this Gāh is not easy to explain.

6. the truthfully spoken word; the truthfully spoken sayings, victorious, Daeva smiting.

This may be due to the relationship of these words with Asha, the hamkārā of Rapithwin.

7. the waters and the Earth and the plants

Rapithwin is supposed to protect the waters and plant roots (see Part I above) during winter and help them grow in summer and so they are invoked here, may be.

8. the spiritual Ashavan Yazatas, conferring good

No clue for this.

9. the Ashavan Amesha Spentas, the Bountiful Immortals.

May be because they are again mentioned in 11 below.

10. the Ashavan, good, powerful, holy Fravashis;

This may be because Rapithwin follows the ten days of Farvardegān, days for worshipping and welcoming Fravashis.

11. the peak of Asha Vahishta who is of great Manthra, of great operation, of great fidelity, of great performance, of great effect in spreading the Mazdayasnian religion.

Once again, Ardibihisht being a hamkārā of Rapithwin, it is invoked here with all its epithets.

12. the assembly and meeting of the Amesha Spentas when they visit the heights of Heaven, to worship and praise the master Zantuma, the Lord of the town

This is a very interesting and confounding invocation of an assembly of Amesha Spentas for the worship and praise of the Lord of the Town. Why him only and not all the other four Lords of family, clan, country and the whole world? And an assembly in Heaven, a very interesting thought!

13. the Ashavan Zantuma, the master of Asha.

Obvious invocation for the Lord of Town.

14. Asha Vahishta, and Ātar, the son of Ahura Mazda!

The two hamkārās of Rapithwin.



### **Final Thoughts**

1. Rapithwin Gāh is the smallest (3 hours only out of 24) and a part time (7 out of 12 months only) Gāh; however, it has been given a very prominent place in our religion starting from the very creation of the world to its celebration on Ardibehesht Roj and Farvardin Māh.
2. It has a unique association with Ardibihisht Amesha Spenta and Adar Yazad, all three representing heat, warmth, truth, etc.
3. It has a unique ritual for its celebration including a Yasna, Bāj and a Jashan.



## UZYAIRIN GĀH

A day in Zoroastrian theology is divided into five sections beginning with midnight, known as GĀH. These are addressed as "Masters of Righteousness", because these periods, if spent in acts, words and thoughts of good, lead to Righteousness. The fourth section, 3 p.m. to sunset, is Uzyeir or "turning out". Dastur Dabu compares every change of GĀH to the change of watch on a ship, or change of guards at a castle, when temple-bells are rung to warn the colony that it is the time for prayer.

These five "Masters of Time" are associated with five Ratus "Spiritual Masters".

Uzyeir goes with "Fradat-Vira", increaser of human beings, and "Dakhyuma", lord of the land.

A notable feature of these associated powers is the ever increasing scope of their usefulness. Particularly noteworthy are the five lords; of the house, of the village, of the province, of the country, and finally the Master of Religion; the Teacher of the World. This succession symbolizes the grades by which a human being can rise through loving service in ever increasing circles of usefulness, up to the stage of "the Holiest Zarathustra", whose love would embrace the whole of humanity.

A quick glance at the translation:

In the beginning Uzyeir and the eight classes of clergy - Zotar, Havanan, Atervakhsi, Fraberetar, Aberetar, Asnatar, Rathwishkar and Sraoshavareza - are invoked and remembered. In Avestan scriptures whenever persons are remembered, they are not living at the time of writing. Hence it may not be too far off to think that when Gāhs were composed, the liturgical ceremonies, like Yasna, were not performed by eight priests.

In the following verses, The Lord of the country who renders prosperity to his people, and The Stars, Moon and Sun which provide light to sustain life are invoked. There is also reverence paid to the Divine Hymns which serve tribulations to sinful person.

The creation of Ahura Mazda and later religious laws along with all sources of water; and water are respectfully invoked.

In its esoteric significance, Dastur Dabu suggests, the GĀH is a token of the spiritual evolution of a soul. Like Baptism, Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, these five GĀHs may be epoch marking the progress of a man, life after life.

Another notable Avesta scholar Sorab Bulsara notes:

To consider the External Nature of the Soul, it is necessary to take the account of the Life Eternal and its Five Stages as profoundly conceived in the Later Avesta. The Soul reveals itself in Matter, but being infinite in its nature it has no material limitations, and is Unlimited in Space and Infinite in Time. So it is expected to approach Hauravatat (Perfection) and Ameretat (Immortality) which constitute the Bliss of Universal and Eternal Consciousness by consistent and progressive righteous living, alongside other Divine Perfection.

This Eternal Progress is distinguished into five stages which are known in Avestan theology the Gathas or the GĀHs.

Finally I like to acknowledge and thank the sources I referred to: K. Kanga, M. Kanga, Dastur Dabu and Sorab Bulsara.



## AIWISRUTHREM GĀH

Talk by Cawas Desai at the NAMC Meeting  
On May 24, 2008

In pre-historic times, without anything but natural light, the ancient peoples regarded the sunlit and dark periods as two opposing realms rather than parts of the same day. Eventually, as observation confirmed that the periods of sunlight and darkness followed each other, the day was divided into two parts, daylight and night. When the division of the day into daylight and night came into being, and the hours of the day entered into the reckoning of time, the day was divided into twelve hours of daylight, and twelve hours of night. The number twelve arose because when these ancients began to count, they were able to count to twelve on each hand by counting on the joints of the fingers of one hand with the thumb. Once both the light and dark hours were divided into twelve parts, the concept of a twenty-four hour day was in place. It was the Greek astronomers, mainly Hipparchus (147 to 127 BC), who have been credited with the introduction of a twenty-four hour day, despite the fact that the Sumerians, as far back as 2000 BC, using a sexagesimal system of mathematics, further divided the hours into minutes and introduced the concept of sixty minutes in each hour and twenty-four hours in each day.

Prior to the time of Zarathushtra, the day was divided into three parts, two daylight watches and one watch for the entire night. According to Boyce, "As Zarathushtra asks in Yasna 44.5 "Who (is he) by whom (were made) dawn, noon and night". The pagan Iranians referred to the two daylight watches as "Hāvani" and "Uzayara", the time of (haoma) pressing and the time of the days outing, each set under the care of one of the two lesser Ahuras, Mithra and Vouruna Apām Napāt. As for the night this was assigned in paganism entirely to the fravashis, as a time of dread." According to Boyce, Zarathushtra added two more watches, "Rapithwin" in between Hāvani and Uzayara, and divided the night into two watches, leaving the first half, "Aiwisruthrem" to the fravashis of the righteous and assigning the second, "Usāh" to Sraosha, Lord of Prayer. The day was, therefore, divided first into four watches of six hours each and then, the afternoon watch was divided into two watches of three hours each, giving us the five "Gāh's" we know today.

According to Mills, the term "Geh" or "Gah" may have arisen from the practice of chanting the Gāthās at different fixed times of the day.

In Pazend, the term "Geh" and interchangeably also "Gāh" came to mean several different things, among them, time, season and also place. In the Afrin prayers, the term "Geh" is used as a prefix, and also as a suffix, to both time and seasons. For instance, we pray "Gehghambār: Maidyozarem-gāh, Maidyoshem-gāh, Paitishem-gāh, Ayathrem-gāh, Maidyarem-gāh and Hamaspathamidem-gāh". Furthermore, the term is also used to describe the Gāthās: "Gehgathābio: Ahunavad-gāh, Ushtavad-gāh, Spentomad-gāh, Vohukhathragāh and Vahishtoish-gāh". It is interesting to note that at the time of praying the Ahunavad gāthā near the body of the deceased, we refer to the prayer as the "gehsārnu".

The term "Gāh" has also been used to describe a place where certain rituals are performed. For all of us Navars, we are very familiar with the term "Bareshnoom-gāh" and for those buried in places where there are no Towers of Silence, we are familiar with the term "Ārām-gāh".



The changing of each "Gāh" has been described as being similar to a "changing of the guard", whereby the Lord of the previous watch turns over his guardianship to the Lord of the incoming watch. It is incumbent upon the community to pay homage to the outgoing Lord and welcome the incoming Lord by performing the "Boi" ceremony and offering the "maachi" as the ceremonial installation of the guardian of the new watch.

In ancient times, the Atash Aderans and Atash Behrams were not only places of worship but also served as Courts of Justice, with different jurisdictions and where different types of appeals were heard. This is the reason why our fire temples are called "Dar-e-Mehr", the Portal or Gateway of Mithra. Meher Yazad, also known as Mithra, is as we know, the "Lord of Contracts" and is described in the Meher Yasht, "We sacrifice unto Mithra, the Lord of wide pastures, who is truth speaking, a chief in assemblies, with a thousand ears, well shapen, with ten thousand eyes, high, with full knowledge, strong, sleepless, and ever awake". Zaehner describes Meher Yazad as "He of the thousand eyes and the thousand ears, the undeceivable master of ten thousand spies". The performance of the "Boi" signaled the closing of the courts bench to one type of jurisdiction and the commencement of another type of jurisdiction, for example the jurisdiction of a magistrate gave way to the jurisdiction of a local judge and so forth till the jurisdiction of the Kings Court.

It is believed that the time of Aiwisruthrem was when appeals against the king were heard. In those ancient times, even the king was not above the law, and appeals against the crown were heard by the Dasturān-Dastur, the one who held the title of "Zarathushtrotemo".

The "Zarathushtrotemo" was the heir to the religious traditions of Zarathushtra himself. When that worthy achieved the exalted state of utmost righteousness he was known as "Aibigaya", capable of transcending life itself, and was in complete attunement with every atom of existence, referred to as "vispa huzyāiti".

Let us now turn to the Aiwisruthrem Gāh, when it is time to rest after the labors of the day, under the watch of the "Zarathushtrotemo" and the fravashis of the righteous.

The translation which follows is that of Jal Rustamji Vimadalal, and the alternative interpretation and commentary is that of Gool Shavaksha :

(1) May it please the Lord! During Aiwisruthrem (prayer time), the time of purity and progress toward the good life, when the High Priest carries on his work, I declare myself to be a follower of Zarathushtra, opposed to Evil and acting in accord with the law of Ahura Mazda.

Commentary: Dear God, may I gain happiness through knowledge and meditation. May I be one with You, the Master Teacher, in thought, word and deed. May my mind, when asleep, be at peace and move in the right direction. May my actions be controlled even when unconscious.

(2) For the worship and glorification of Behram Yazad (who grants the success that comes of final liberation), and the other beneficent angels created by Ahura Mazda, and for the timely arrival of all seasons of the year, may the Chief Priest (Zaota) recite "Yatha Ahu Vairyo" and may his associate (Rathvi) recite "Atha Ratush ashat-chit hacha".

Commentary: May my soul's pure spirit (fravashi) be one with the world's pure spirit (farohar). I pray to you, Oh Master Teacher, to reveal to me the true meaning of the "Ahunavairyo" which I can pass on to others.



(3) I worship Ahura Mazda, Zarathushtra and the Ameshaspentas.

I worship the noble, brave world-uplifting, guiding spirits (Fravashis) of the pure.

I adore the power of beneficent and timely prayers.

Commentary: Oh Ahura Mazda, may my soul's spirit be one with You. This can be gained by good thoughts which will take my soul's memory right to the time of Zarathushtra and beyond and make my spirit one with you. Then I will gain all the knowledge of life and the seventy-two aspects of life.

(4) I worship the noble, brave, world-uplifting, guiding spirits (Fravashis) of the pure.

I adore the power of beneficent and timely prayers.

Commentary: Oh Time, who art the maker of mans mind, the rising sun is your first master. It gives man an idea of beauty. As soon as man appreciates beauty he will dislike all that is bad and ugly.

(5) I worship Aiwishruthrem. I worship Fire, son of Ahura Mazda, the universal purifier, and all articles of utility created by Ahura Mazda.

Commentary: Rituals are like mental exercises which get the mind ready to attain controlled sleep. May my conscious sleeping soul, 'Aibigaya" look after me from sunset to midnight when my body is lying uncontrolled. May my soul's faith be alert like a flame which is kept burning properly.

(6) I worship "Frādat-Vispām Huzyāiti" (all progress toward good life). I worship Zarathushtra and the power of beneficent and holy prayers as well as the High Priest who practices the teachings of Zarathushtra.

Commentary: "Frādat-Vispām Huzyāiti is the peaceful part of the nights sleep. Prayer is the life-line of this sleep. It joins the soul of the sleeping person with the soul of the earth "geush urvān" and brings the blessings of God on him.

(7) I worship all righteous leaders of all grades and kinds, spiritual as well as temporal.

Commentary: The Initiate has to make his own mind and body ready so that when his astral mind and body take over in sleep he knows what is happening.

(8) I worship all righteous young men and all patriots, whether of this country or of foreign lands.

Commentary: Wisdom of meditation, wisdom of good words and wisdom of good deeds leads the righteous man up to the sixth step of the ladder of wisdom. Thus step by step from the first to the sixth ghambār or "soul's steps" up the ladder, man reaches his Creator, by wisdom, faith and piety. May all good men and women reach this wisdom through their own self control.

(9) I worship all righteous women who are truthful, fertile and obedient to their husbands.

(10) I worship the noble, brave, world-uplifting, guiding spirits (Fravashis) of the pure.

I worship Behram Yazad (who grants the success that comes of final liberation) and the other beneficent angels created by Ahura Mazda. The timely arrival of all seasons of the year do I admire.

Commentary: May our love for others be pure and may our thoughts, words and deeds be utterly good. May husbands and wives love each other deeply without thought for anyone else and with a love which is true and pure. This true love for each other will bind them to their God. They will love their children and



teach them to love God and have good thoughts, speak good words and do good deeds so that they will one day be one with God in spirit and all the knowledge of the past and the future will be theirs.

(11) Thee do I worship, O purifying Fire, son of Ahura Mazda. I worship the souls (Urvān) of the departed, united to the guiding spirits (Fravashis) of the pure.

Commentary: May the fire within my soul burn as brightly as the fire I light with such care and precision. May my wisdom shine as brightly as the fire I kindle.

(12) I worship Ahura Mazda, the Supreme Lord, the most righteous of all. I revere the religion of Zarathushtra. I revere all deeds of goodness, done and to be done. Ahura Mazda knows who amongst the living are the true devotees – those devotees do I revere.

Commentary: I pray that all the souls that are living and dead be one with God one day. I pray for myself and others so that all who are living and dead and those who will be born in the future be blest. May our souls be one with Eternity.

(13) I revere the worship, the glory and the power of Behram Yazad (who grants the success that comes of final liberation), of the other beneficent Yazads created by Ahura Mazda and of all the timely seasons of the year.

Commentary: When all human beings are filled with the seventy-two attributes and virtues, "Ashaonām" they will be one with God. Till then dear God, help us to be truthful to you.

The Lord "Aiwisruthrem" is now ready to turn over his watch to "Sraosha", the guardian of the soul.

01. Scientific American, March 2007.
02. Mary Boyce, Zoroastrianism.
03. L.H. Mills, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 31.
04. Dastur Khurshed S. Daboo, "Athornan-no Dini Prakash".
05. Afrin-e Ardāfravash.
06. Afrin-e Ardāfravash
07. Mills' translation, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 23
08. R.C. Zaehner, Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism.
09. Dastur Khurshed S. Daboo, Message of Zarathushtra, A Manual of Zoroastrianism.
10. Jal Rustamji Vimadalal, "Pak Khordeh Avesta" A Book of Daily Prayers.
11. Gool K.S. Shavaksha, Zoroastrian Credo.



## **USHAHIN GAH**

By Ervad Gev Karkaria

Considering I am the first person to make this presentation, I thought it prudent to give a brief introduction on what the gahs mean and their significance in our daily prayers.

In Zoroastrianism a day is divided into 5 parts and is commonly referred to as "five watches of the day". In earlier times Ushahin was the first watch of the day which stretched from Midnight until Dawn. The word Ushahin according to Dasturji Daboo has been derived from the Sanskrit word Ushah meaning Dawn. The second watch of the day Havan stretched from dawn till 12 noon, the third watch Rapithwin from 12 noon to 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the fourth watch Uziran from 3 o'clock to sunset and the fifth and the last watch Aiwisruthrem from sunset to midnight.

Khojeste Mistree in his book "Zoroastrianism an Ethnic Perspective" states that in Pre-Zoroastrian times the Iranians divided their worship into three periods, Havan, Uziran and Aiwisruthrem – morning afternoon and night. The morning or Havani watch was under the protection of Mithra whereas the afternoon Uziran was under the Guardian ship of Apam-Napat the son of the waters and the night Aiwisruthrem assigned to fravashis of the departed. It seems Zarathushtra introduced two reforms, one by splitting the morning period into two by adding the watch of Rapithwin "the Spirit of the Noon". The other where the night was divided into two parts, the first half is Aiwisruthrem and the second half (the midnight watch) from midnight to dawn was called Ushahin, dedicated to Sarosh, the Lord of Prayer

He also goes on to say that during the five winter months (Mah Avan to Mah Spendarmad), Rapithwin it is believed goes underground during winter season in order that he may give warmth to the roots and waters so that the cycle of regeneration may begin on the first day of Spring, Naurooz. For those five months, therefore, there is a second Havan watch when you once again recite the Havan Gah.

It was often wondered why in ancient times Ushahin which only started at midnight was considered the first watch of the day. The explanation that both Dasturji Daboo and Taraporewalla have given is that during the time when Persian Empire spread far and wide, there may have been certain parts of Persia that had close proximity to the North Pole where the sun during certain times of the year may have risen at midnight.

Eruch Taraporewalla as a footnote to Yasna 43.12 (14-16) in his book Divine Songs Of Zarathushtra and Dasturji Daboo in His Gujarati book "Athra Van No Dini Prakash" have associated the five gahs with the five Lords or Ratus or Masters of Social Organization. The first such Ratu is Namano-Paiti, the lord of the home or head of the family and is associated with Ushahin Gah. According to Taraporewalla the family or home being the first unit of social organization must necessarily be associated with the first Gah of the day, another reason why Ushahin was the first and not the last Gah of the day. Havan Gah is associated with Viso-Paiti the Lord or Head of the village. The third Gah Rapithwin is associated with Zantoo-paiti the Lord of the Province. The fourth Gah Uziran is associated with the Lord of the country Dakhyu-paiti. The fifth and the last Gah is associated with the holiest Zarathushtra (Zarathushtrēm) the supreme lord or Dasturan-e-Dastur. Taraporewalla goes on to explain that these five Lords symbolize the grades by which a human being may rise through loving service in ever increasing circles of usefulness and love. The final stage would be of the Holiest Zarathushtra whose love would embrace the whole of humanity.

Dasturji Daboo, further points out that the word Gah is not limited to five watches of the day. According



to him, it is a much broader term. The word encompasses time, seasons, place, etc. For example, during the Ghahambar prayers we recite Geh Gahambar Madyozarem Gah or Geh Gahambar Ayathrem Gah etc. Similarly, when we recite the Gathas during the last five days of the year, we say Geh Gathabio, Geh Ahunavad, etc. During the Paidast ceremony when we perform the last rites, we recite the Ahunavad Gatha near the body of the deceased, and we call it the Geh Sarna ceremony. The word Gah is used also to denote a place. Aramgah, Barasnum Gah etc.

A Zoroastrian is supposed to pray at least 5 times a day in order to remember God, who through his agents maintains a continuous watch during these 5 periods that make up 24 hours. As much as we dedicate our daily prayers to the Day (Roj), Month (Mah) we also dedicate and pay reverence to the time of the day "Gah" (Roj Neknam, Roj Paknam, Roj Mubarak... Mah Mubarak... Gah...). Dasturji Daboo further explains that in order for people to recognize and be alert to this time change for each watch during the day, the caretaker of Kebla/Atash/Agiyari, rings the bell whilst performing the BOI ceremony, alerting the Anjuman in the area that it is time for us to pray again and ward off evil from our body, soul & house.

He points out the similarity of this ritual in other religions like the Muslims, Hindus and Christians. Amongst Muslims, one of the care-takers of the Mosque goes to the top of the Minaret and calls out to his people to take time off from their tasks and come to the mosque for prayer. The Hindus also have the ritual of ringing the bell when they perform Arti. Similarly the Church bells ring alerting the people in their parish to attend the mass.

Dastoorji Daboo went on to state that in ancient Iran the word Geh/Gah was also associated with the time when the court of law would assemble to render their Judgment. Different levels of court would assemble at different times with lowest court assembling during the Ushahin Gah and the highest court or the Supreme Court assembling during Aiwisruthrem Gah. The judgment in each court was then rendered by the Lord or Ratu associated with that Gah with Supreme Court judgment being rendered by Dasturan-e-Dastur or "Zarathushtrrem".

Now we come to the actual translation of the Ushahin Gah. What I have outlined below is the combination of the translations by Sethna and Kanga:

1) As in most of our Khordeh-Avesta prayers we start with the homage to Ahura Mazda. (Khshnaotrha Ahurahe Mazdao) to the glory of Ahura Mazda, followed by three Ashen Vohu. (Fravarane.....Ahura takeosho) I profess myself to be the Mazda worshipping follower of Zarathushtra opposed to evil (vidaevo) acting in accord with the law of Ahura (Ahura takaesho). This sentence is repeated in all gahs preceding the prayer where we pay reverence to the particular Gah of the day. (Ushahinai ashone.....Frasastayecha) I offer and dedicate this prayer for the reverence, praise, propitiation and glorification of Ushahin (Dawn) and for the reverence, praise, propitiation and glorification of one's desire for guarding the house, the righteous lord of righteousness. The words "the righteous lord of righteousness or the righteous master of righteousness" are often repeated in all gahs and they refer to the Lord or Ratu associated with the Gah as explained earlier and to Zarathushtra and Ahura Mazda depending on the context.

2) (Saraoshahe ashyehe.... Frasastayecha) for the reverence, praise, propitiation and glorification of Pious Saraosha of pure strength of gaining victory, making the world prosperous with the most just Rashnu Rajistah (righteous justice) and Arshat or Astad Yazata (truthful justice) and causing



the settlement to flourish.. (Yatha ahu vairyo..... mroutu) may the Zaoatar proclaim before me the sacred verses of yatha ahu vairyo and declare that "just as god is to be admired so also the prophet on account of his righteousness and who has declared the righteous wisdom (Vidhvao mroutu)

3) (Ahurem mazdam..... ashaonam yazamaide) this paragraph is common to all Gahs And pays reverence to the righteous lord Ahura Mazda, the righteous prophet Zarathushtra. It also pays reverence to the Fravashi of holy Zarathushtra and sings the praises of the holy Amesha Spentas.

4) (Ashaonam Vanguish..... Ratufritim Yazamaide) this paragraph, again common to all gahs, pays reverence to excellent, brave, prosperity bringing Fravashis of the righteous. It praises the lords of the material and the spiritual world. It praises the most helpful of the Yazatas and the most worthy amongst the lords of righteousness bringing to our help the well timed prayer.

5) (Ushahinem.....Armaim yazamaide) here we pay reverence to Ushahin (Dawn). It describes dawn as beautiful, brilliant and brilliantly spread, full of luster in the house, pleasing to men, nimbly spread upon the seven regions of the earth. We worship Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas Vohu Mano, Ashavahishta, Kshathravairyas and Spenta Armaity.

6) (Berejim .....ashvanem ashahe ratum yazamaide).this paragraph is a reverence to Berejya the righteous Lord, with the blessing of the good Mazda worshipping religion, reverence is paid to the principal master of the house Ratu Nmano Paiti the holy lord of holiness.

7) (Saraoshem ashim.....varedat gaethem yazamaide) we once again pay reverence to Saraosha Yazata who is beautiful victorious makes the world we live in prosperous and righteous. We also pay reverence to Rashnu Yazata the just and Astad Yazata the promoter of the world bringing prosperity to the household and causing it to flourish.

The following 3 paragraphs 8, 9 & 10 are repeated in all 5 gahs.

8) (Thwam Atarem.....Yao ashaonam farvashayo). Here we revere the purifying (puthrem) fire (atarem) of Ahura Mazda the lord of righteousness, we revere this exalted mind (baresma) righteously spread with holiness together with ceremonial presents (hadha-Zaothrem) and sacred girdle (hadha-aiwyaonghanem). We revere the lord of righteousness, we revere the source of water, we revere Neryosang (Nairim Sanghem-it is the fire that resides in the heart of the kings and assists them in the management of their State and it is also an angel the messenger of Ahura Mazda- Kanga) we revere the powerful Yazata Dami Upamanem (Damoish Upamanem) the symbol of wisdom, we revere the souls (urvano) of the departed and the Fravashis of the righteous.

9) (Ratum Berezantem..... Vareshyamnacha) we revere the supreme lord Ahura Mazda who is highest in holiness and who has advanced farthest in righteousness. We revere all the sacred verses of Zarathushtra and all the deeds of goodness which have been performed and shall be performed hereafter.

(Yenghe hatam.....) We praise those men and women amongst us who have performed good deeds and whose goodness is judged by righteous Ahura Mazda.

10) (Yasnemcha ...Varedat gaethao). I admire and praise the power, strength and glory of righteous and victorious Sarosh Yazata, of the just Rashna Yazata and of Astad Yazata.



In conclusion I would like to quote from the book entitled "Zarathustra's Glorious Faith" by N.K.D.Naigamwalla which sums up in short the true significance of the five gahs.

Quote;

This is the "Worship" and the "Praise", the "Propitiation" and the "Glorification" of the "GAH" (Five daily periods of prayer). The right employment of each "Gah" bears within itself the power of leading to righteousness.

Each "Gah" – addressed as "The Master of Time" and "Master of Righteousness" for that particular division of the day, implies that the good "Mastery", "Rulership" or "Governance" of that "Time of Day" IN THINKING, SPEAKING AND DOING GOOD- leads to "Righteousness" Unquote