

The Behram Yasht

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The Yazata Behram, known in the Avesta as ‘*Verethraghna*’ (lit. ‘smiting the enemy’), occupies a pivotal role in the minds of most Zarathushtrians. His popularity stems from his appellation as the vanquisher of all foes - ‘*dushman-zadaar*’ and one who gives victory – ‘*firozgar*’ to all those who ask for his help. In fact, our safe arrival in India from Iran can be ascribed to the Yazata Behram. The *Kisseh-i-Sanjan*, (lit. ‘The Chronicle of Sanjan’), is the oldest account we have of the coming of the Parsis to India. Written by Bahman Kaikobad of Navsari in 1600 AD in Persian verse, the *Kisseh* recounts that when the Parsis were on their way to Sanjan by boat, a violent storm arose in the sea. The Pilgrim Fathers prayed to Behram Yazata to save them from the storm, promising to consecrate a great fire temple in his name. The storm subsided, and the indebted Parsis consecrated the first Atash Behram in India – the Iranshah as a token of their gratitude.

Although there are several references to the Yazata Behram in the Avesta, the most comprehensive account of his characteristics and his work can be found in the special prayer dedicated to him – the Behram Yasht. The Yashts form a major part of what is called the ‘Younger’ or ‘later’ Avesta, and have remained a somewhat baffling part of the Zarathushtrian scriptures. Some go as far as to term them ‘literature’ with some interesting titbits of history, geography, astrology and mythology thrown in. Many aver that the Yashts represent a ‘dilution’ of the original thoughts as propounded by Zarathushtra in the Gathas: the resurgence of a pantheon of ‘angels’ – the Yazatas, whom Zarathushtra had ‘banished’ from the reformed Mazdayasni religion. But the Avesta abounds in such peculiarities. Some of its most obscure parts contain many of life’s greatest teachings – of course they are well hidden in numerous allegories and mystic constructs. What is needed is a master key to unravel this book of mysteries. The correct application of ‘taavil’ or the inner essence of the Avesta can unlock its magnificent splendour and uncover its spiritual beauty – and give us real lessons for everyday living.

Taavil reveals to us that the Yashts are a description of the work that a particular Yazata or Divine Being performs in Nature. The very word ‘Yasht’ denotes something that is worthy of being worshipped, of attuning to. Thus by praying Behram Yasht, not only do we remember

and venerate the work done by the Yazata Behram in nature, we also in a very small but significant way, help him in his divine tasks. The Yashts are the perfect vehicle given to us by Zarathushtra to join him and his Yazatas in their never-ending task of taking all of us closer to the Creator Ahura Mazda.

The Behram Yasht is a slightly long composition, with 22 ‘kartas’ or chapters, many of which are quite poetic. The first 10 chapters explain that whenever a person asks for help from Behram Yazata, he appears to the devotee in 10 different forms. Each of the ten chapters details these 10 forms in which the Yazata Behram appears to the devotee.

Kartas 1-10: General Introduction

The Yasht opens with Zarathushtra asking Ahura Mazda as to who is the most well-armed (Avesta ‘zayotemo’) amongst all His Yazatas. Ahura Mazda replies that it is the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura. (Avesta ‘ahuradhata’). This simple construct reveals to us the working of the Yazata. The Avesta word ‘zayotemo’ means ‘most well-armed’ or ‘most victorious’, that is, ‘one giving victory through weapons, arms’. What does this militaristic sounding statement mean? Taavil reveals that there are ten different categories or manifestations of evil. All of us have some or the other form of these ten evils. When someone achieves the pinnacle of all evil, he is known in the Avesta as ‘dah-aka’ ‘one with 10 evils’ – which is the adjective of the evil Zohak. This is destruction and pure evil personified. One who does evil purely for the sake of doing so. But in Nature, there is no destruction only for the sake of destruction. All destruction caused by Nature is ultimately for doing good.

The Yazata Behram is the one who saves us from falling for the temptation of doing any of these 10 evils. He is given the spiritual authority by Ahura Mazda to destroy these temptations and further the progress of man. Hence he is described as being the best armed of all the Yazatas.

The Yazata Behram is also described as being one created by Ahura. (Avesta ‘ahuradhata’). Various personages in the Avesta are described as either being created by Ahura (‘ahuradhata’) or created by Mazda (‘mazdadhata’). Generally both these words are translated

as ‘created by Ahura Mazda’ since both Ahura and Mazda refer to Ahura Mazda. However, there exists a much deeper meaning behind these words which is revealed by the application of taavil. Man is on a long journey – the journey to take him to Ahura Mazda. On this arduous trek, he receives the help of several people, and is harassed by others. He commits various acts of evil and also does good for others. This interaction with other people creates what is known as ‘Keshash’, or the Law of action and reaction. Thus man’s actions can either take him closer to Ahura Mazda or away from Him. The Law that governs the going away from Ahura Mazda is known as ‘Mazdadat’, while the Law that takes man closer to Ahura Mazda is called ‘Ahuradat’. Hence the epithet ‘created by Mazda’ is used for those Divine Beings who help man on his journey away from Ahura Mazda, while the adjective ‘created by Ahura’ is used for those Divine Beings who help man on his journey to Ahura Mazda. The Yazata Behram is described as ‘created by Ahura’ since he helps those of us who are on the path to Ahura Mazda. That is, Behram Yazata helps us overcome the ten temptations of evil and leads us to salvation. Each of these 10 manifestations of evil is dealt with separately by Behram Yazata. He appears to us in different forms when he helps us. These are the ten forms that are mentioned in the first 10 chapters of the Behram Yasht.

Man’s current life is governed to a large extent by the thoughts, words and deeds he had committed in his previous lives. Every atom of his body is ingrained with the characteristics of his deeds from his previous lives. This causes him to keep falling prey to certain temptations. His mind and emotion are much like the tides in the sea – sometimes high, sometimes low. As the moon causes the high and low tides, so also the planets of a man’s horoscope govern his emotions, tempting him to do either good or evil. Man has the freedom to choose between good and evil. To a certain extent he can do as he wills. This freedom can either lead him away from Ahura Mazda or closer to Ahura Mazda.

But with the freedom, Ahura Mazda has also given man a very powerful tool to control his free-wheeling mind. This tool is his conscience. When man thinks of doing something evil, his conscience pricks him, it alerts his mind. Either man listens to his conscience, or ignores it. If he listens to his conscience and keeps away from the evil, his is on the right path. Generally however, man ignores his conscience and falls prey to his temptations. At that time, again his conscience pricks him and makes him realise that he has done something wrong. His conscience asks him to do the ‘Patet’, i.e. to honestly accept that he has done something wrong, to resolve to try and not do it again, and to willingly and un-grudgingly

accept the just rewards of his evil actions. At this time, if man heeds his conscience and offers Patet, he realises his weakness. He comes to understand that his body is constructed in such a way that he will always keep on getting tempted by something or the other. He thus begins his search for something, for somebody who will protect him.

Protection can be of two types. Either the man may decide to run away from the temptation whenever it occurs. Or he may choose to stand up and fight the temptation. At that time, Ahura Mazda guides him to an Ustad – a spiritual master who reveals to him that it is only the Yazata Behram who can give him the complete protection. Man then begins the spiritual practice of praying to Behram Yazata for 40 days and maintaining strict mental and spiritual discipline. If he is successful in controlling his mind and body for the 40 day period, then at the end, the Yazata Behram appears to the man either in a dream or in various other ways, taking the form of one of the ten personages mentioned in the first 10 chapters of the Yasht, and offers him the spiritual tools to withstand his temptations.

The Yasht says that the Yazata Behram offers 2 different toolsets to the man who asks for his aid, depending on his need and his strength. The first toolset contains two tools – vohu-xhwareno ('the good glory') and plain-xhwareno ('the glory'). Both are called 'mazdadhata' - created by Mazda, that is, tools helping one when going away from Ahura Mazda. The second toolset also contains two tools – 'Baeshyaza' ('health') and 'Ama' ('courage, bravery'), which are designated as 'ahuradhata', that is, helping man on his way to Ahura Mazda.

Man's mind is always in a state of confusion, wanting to do good sometimes, recklessly evil at some other time. Sometimes his actions pull him deeper into the quicksand of Keshash, at other times he advances forward, untangling his convoluted connections with others. Depending on his state, Behram Yazata helps him through any of the four tools. When man makes his Keshash murkier, when he further entangles his obligations with others, Behram Yazata applies the tool of plain-xhwareno, which limits his further downfall. But when man is almost through with his obligations, and desires to go towards Ahura Mazda, Behram Yazata applies the tool of vohu-xhwareno, which makes man see the clear path to Ahura Mazda. Once man begins his progress towards God, the other toolset takes over. Behram Yazata applies the tool of Baeshyaza – giving all kinds of physical, mental and emotional health and goodness to the man. (Incidentally, the English word 'physician' is derived from

the Avesta ‘Baeshyaza’.) Subsequently he gives the man ‘Ama’ – the courage, fortitude and bravery to withstand any shocks of life and not be daunted in his quest to reach his creator.

How does Behram Yazata decide in which form to help an individual? Generally, man is judged by the quantum and type of sins he has committed in his life. The Avesta details four different categories of sins.

1. *Margarzan*: The most heinous of all sins, for which there is no *Patet* except to take birth again.
2. *Farod-mand*: Serious sins which can be overcome without the necessity of another birth.
3. *Manideh*: Sin caused by the effect of sins done in previous lives.
4. *Aze*: Sins arising through contact with other people.

This can also be categorised as under.

Type	Sin	Thoughts	Words	Deeds
A	<i>Margarzan</i>	Very bad, with no effort to reform	Very bad, with no effort to reform	Very bad, with no effort to reform
B1	<i>Farod-mand</i>	Bad, but stops further deterioration	Bad, but admits as soon as he lies	Bad, but commits sin in some moderation
B2	<i>Farod-mand</i>	Bad, but tries to stop, and succeeds after major efforts	Bad. Lies and then feels sorry about it. Tries to offer <i>Patet</i>	Bad, but only minor sins
C	<i>Manideh</i>	Good, but suffers due to bad relatives	Good	Good, but is falsely accused in others' sins
D	<i>Aze</i>	Very good but stays with sinners to impress and reform them, and hence gets contaminated	Very good	Very good

According to the Behram Yasht, the Yazata Behram appears to a person who requests for his help in any of ten forms. These are:

The wind

A bull

A horse

A camel

A wild pig

A youth of 15

A bird

A wild ram

A goat

A valiant warrior

Taavil reveals that for Type A men, that is, those who have Margarzan sins, Behram Yazata appears in any of the first three forms – the wind, bull or horse

For Types B1 and B2, Behram Yazata appears in either of the first seven forms – that is the three above plus the camel, pig, youth or bird.

For Type C and D, the Yazata Behram can appear in any of the ten forms.

Thus Behram Yazata goes to a person in the form which will be most suited to him, and depending on what boon or favour the person has asked for.

Having taken this preliminary introduction, we shall now explore each of the forms in which the Yazata appears by first seeing the literal translation of each karta and then unravelling the taavil.

Karta 1: The Wind

1. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual yazatas?’ Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: ‘(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!’
2. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the first time in the shape of a strong, beautiful wind, created by Mazda, bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

The first form in which the Yazata Behram visits one who desires help from him is the wind. The wind is described as being strong, yet beautiful. The strong denotes that Behram Yazata visits the seeker as a strong task master. Yet he is beautiful, one who gives hope, who carries a sweet scent, the tidings of good fortune. Behram Yazata comes to the seeker bearing the four gifts – *vohu-xhwareno*, plain-*xhwareno*, Baeshyaza and Ama.

Taavil reveals that Behram Yazata comes in this form to acts as a breeze to cool the passions and temptations that arise from the deeds of our previous life. When these temptations and passions go out of control, man begins to undergo various crises in his public life. He suffers public defeats and embarrassments. Behram Yazata in the form of the strong, yet beautiful wind first cools the heat of the seeker’s passions. The beauty of the wind form arouses faith

in the man and a growing realisation of the futility of his passions. This realisation helps man conquer his passion, the next time it rears its ugly head. Just as one feels cool in the shade after standing in the heat for a long time, so also the wind offers man the relief arising out of getting over his passions.

When a Type A person is visited by Behram Yazata in this form, the wind is really strong. Immediately he takes the protection of his Ustad, who gives him the strength to withstand the wind. Margarzan sins can never be washed away, except in another birth. Behram Yazata gives man the succour to withstand another birth. He gives him the strength to withstand the shocks in his public life, and to some extent helps him in restoring his tarnished reputation. The reformed person then adopts the path of tarikats, living his life according to the dictates of the religion. What starts out as an experiment in righteous living soon becomes a way of life, and the person is changed forever.

The common paragraphs of the first 10 kartas

3. Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): 'I am the most courageous in courage, I am the most victorious in victory, I am the most glorious in glory, I am the most favouring in favour, I am the most benefiting in benefit, I am the most health-giving in health.'
4. Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons, of the demons and of wicked men, of sorcerers and witches, of the tyrants, of the Kiks and the Karaps.
5. On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, with celebrated Yasna. With libations do we worship the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura in accordance with the first laws of Ahura.

(We worship the Yazata Behram) with Haoma, with milk, with Baresman, with the wisdom of the tongue, with Manthras, with words, with deeds, with libations, with righteous speech, with prayer.

Then, among the existing ones, we worship those males and those females whom Ahura Mazda has known to be better in Yasna on account of their righteousness.

The common paragraphs of the first ten kartas describe in detail the seven presents that Behram Yazata gets for the man who is fortunate enough to be visited by him. What are these gifts?

1. *Ama*: courage. Behram Yazata gives his seeker the courage to stand up to the hard times that will descend on him due to his sins.
2. *Verethraghna*: victory. The second gift is of victory – the victory over our minds and bodies. The power to control and extinguish our passions and temptations.
3. *Xhwareno*: Glorious blessings that will help the man tide over the darkest periods of his life.
4. *Yaana*: Divine inspiration. The power to see into the future, to realise that one is being tested and to emerge successful out of the ordeal.
5. *Saoka*: Benefits. Behram Yazata brings a bagful of benefits to his seeker – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.
6. *Baeshyaza*: Health – physical, mental emotional and spiritual

7. *Taurvayeni*: Protection from different evils which are enumerated in paragraph 4, viz.
 - a. *Daeva*: Protection from physical and mental illnesses;
 - b. *Mashya*: Family quarrels, legal troubles;
 - c. *Yaatu*: Evil magic, protection from life without proper tarikats, evil manthras, and the greed for excessive profits in business
 - d. *Pari*: Sexual evils, unnatural acts, consorting with evil spirits
 - e. *Saathra*: Different types of oppressors, tyrants, nasty bureaucrats, corrupt politicians.
 - f. *Kiks*: Those with eyes, yet who refuse to see and accept the truth – the wilfully blind
 - g. *Karaps*: Those with ears, yet who refuse to listen to and accept the will of Ahura Mazda, the wilfully deaf.

The three paragraphs contained within para 5 contain 3 personal request from the devotee to the Yazata Behram. In the first request, the devotee asks to receive the divine brilliance and glory of Behram Yazata through the thought fields (*'kuniyats'*) formed by the recitation of millions of Behram Yashts by other devotees in the past, to which his prayer also adds. In his second request, the devotee asks for the strength and power to attune with Behram Yazata in the same way as the great Haoma did. Finally, the devotee requests the help and assistance of all those illustrious men and women who are on their way to Ahu, and asks for his thoughts to be in constant synergy with the thoughts of these great masters.

Karta 2: The Bull

6. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: 'O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual yazatas?' Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: '(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!'
7. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the second time in the shape of a beautiful bull, with yellow ears and golden horns, upon which horns rests the well shaped and beautiful Ama. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): 'I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The second form in which the Yazata Behram visits his devotee is that of a bull – but it is not a normal bull – this is a bull with golden ears and golden horns. On these horns sits the beautiful Ama Yazata.

The bull denotes two things – a willingness to bear a heavy load without complaining; and extreme obedience. Behram Yazata takes this form when he goes to a person who is completely overloaded with the pressures of life. When public defeat and embarrassment have made a person despondent, when family squabbles sap his mental and emotional well-being – it is at these times that Behram Yazata visits one who has turned to him in his hour of need and despair in this form. The Yazata gives the weary man the patience of the bull. The happiness in bearing a load, the absence of sorrow in working hard, yet that firm belief and faith that ultimately victory will be his – because he is on the path to Ahura Mazda.

The golden ears denote the fact that the five senses of that bull are fully developed. They have overcome the passions; they are not under the influence of worldly emotions. These are developed ears, one that can distinguish between worldly truths and Divine Truth. They have the ability to hear the divine music of Ahura Mazda which permeates the entire cosmos. The Yazata helps the devotee develop such ears for himself – that he may realise the real meaning of ‘*Vohu Mano*’ – the Good Mind.

Horns are for a bull’s protection and attack, if required. The golden horns signify that the bull is spiritually advanced. The horns will be used to protect the just man, and will be used to attack only as a last resort.

The significance of Ama sitting on these horns is to show that the defence or attack of the bull will be full of courage and won’t end till victory is won. At the same time it will be a sweet victory and not a cruel one – the vanquished will see his fault and gladly accept his punishment, he will reform his ways and become a friend of the bull. These are the lessons taught to the weary man when the Yazata Behram visits him in this form.

Karta 3: The Horse

8. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual yazatas?’ Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: ‘(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!’
9. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the third time in the shape of a beautiful white horse, with yellow ears and a golden caparison, upon whose forehead sits the well shaped and beautiful Ama. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): ‘I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The third form in which the Yazata Behram visits his devotee is that of a horse – but again it is not a normal horse – it is an extraordinarily white animal, with yellow ears and golden caparison, on whose forehead sits the beautiful Ama Yazata. The colour white denotes immortality, the highest truth, justice and purity. The yellow ears denote that the animal has conquered all its passions; it is in a state of enlightened consciousness. The golden caparison denotes its brilliance and radiance which arises out of its highly evolved spiritual state. The horse is called beautiful – that is, possessing such ethereal beauty that a lay person seeing it is filled with awe and devotion for things divine, and leaves items of temporary physical beauty.

This third form also denotes the natural progression that our evolution must follow. We start off with being buffeted by the winds of fate; then we learn to bear our heavy load, and then pick up the fleetness of the steed.

Karta 4: The Camel

10. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual Yazatas?’ Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: ‘(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!’
11. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the fourth time in the shape of a camel, load bearing, worth domesticating, walking steadfast, brave, possessing knowledge of value to man.
12. Who (the camel), of all males seeking a mate, has the greatest strength and the greatest desire when he goes to his females. Well-protected indeed, are those females who the camel protects, (this camel) who has thick forelegs, a large hump, keen sighted, having an intelligent mind, bright, tall, strong.
13. Whose (the camel’s) piercing sight goes far in the dark night, who throws white foam on his head, well-kneed, well-footed, who stands seeing all around like an all powerful ruler. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): ‘I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The fourth form that the Yazata Behram takes is of an extraordinary camel. The description given above of a testosterone charged camel appears highly fanciful and exaggerated. While some features are natural for a camel such as a large hump, strong forelegs and the ability to bear a heavy load, how can a camel possess knowledge of use to man? How can a camel have an intelligent mind? What is the connection with a camel protecting his females?

Taavil reveals that the camel denotes the highest state of spiritual wisdom and evolution – which is why one of the ways the Prophet’s name can be translated, is ‘Golden Camel’. There are two types of knowledge - material and spiritual. Material knowledge gives rise to false pride and ego in man. He feels that his apparent mastery in a chosen field gives him the right to pontificate in other matters too. His seeming erudition closes his eyes and ears to the true knowledge of Nature. His knowledge is used by others to harm humanity or wreak vengeance over others. On the other hand, spiritual knowledge is that which arouses humility in the man. The more he learns, the more he realises how little he knows. He applies his true knowledge for the upliftment of his fellow brethren, and does not try to make money out of his knowledge. The camel denotes the end result of such spiritual wisdom. The fourth karta of the Yasht describes the camel using various adjectives, which with applied taavil reveal the true import of this form that the Yazata takes to help the needy devotee.

The camel is described as being *vadaryaosh* – load bearing, that is, it has ample of knowledge but since it can’t use the same, it becomes a load which it bears. It is called *dadansaosh* – worth domesticating – any knowledge is worth acquiring, hence the true devotee learns from all sources – even from those he may not agree with. The camel is *aiwi-tachina* – walking steadfast – the true acolyte keeps on walking through thick and thin, never giving up hope. Just as the camel is the only hope of the desert traveller, so also Behram Yazata is the only hope for those buffeted by the winds of fate. Hence the camel is called *urvato* – strong and brave; stamping forward relentlessly – *frasparana* and one possessing knowledge of value to man – *gaethaush-mashyo-vangahe* – since it has the knowledge that will help man in this life and later, and help him get closer to Ahura Mazda.

Hence when Behram Yazata visits his devotee in this form, he first gives the gifts of divine wisdom, and the courage to go ahead relentlessly, whatever the odds. The man realises the futility of worldly knowledge and embraces the spiritual. He therefore begins to use this knowledge for others, uplifting them along with himself. In advancing others, he advances himself. Hence paragraph 12 of the Yasht which seeks to portray the camel’s sexual ardour is nothing but great wisdom cloaked in material terms. The ‘female camels’ that the camel runs to and protects refers to the urge of the enlightened mind to similarly awaken the mind of others within his vicinity. The true devotee realises the importance of the family way of life as revealed by the Prophet Zarathushtra – hence seeks out a spouse, starts a family and works towards providing them a stable but bright future. And since he has been visited by the Yazata Behram, he is able to provide well for them – hence the ‘females’ are described as being ‘well-protected’. How is the devotee able to do this? Since the Yazata Behram has given him the qualities of *vadairi* – load bearing, *ash-bazu* – strong forelegs and *stvi-kaofa* – a large hump – a strong mind and complete resourcefulness, the devotee is able to peer ahead into the future – *smarshno-daema* – and apply his evolved intelligence – *jiro-saro* – to protect his family and provide for them. His rising brilliance – *raeva* – makes him even more exalted – *berezo*, and the devotee develops a new fearlessness – *Ama*.

This highly evolved being is now a powerful ally of the good forces of Nature. Hence paragraph 13 of the Yasht describes his new courage. This being’s piercing sight goes far in the dark night – that is, even in the darkest point of our lives, when we think we are all alone in our sorrow and misfortune and misery is all pervading, the healing powers of this being help us see the path to Ahura Mazda. Even in the face of the strongest adversity, the being infuses us with courage – ‘to throw foam on his head’ – to fearlessly face the evil adversary – throw a challenge at the evil one, to dare him to try to sway us. In the midst of confusion, the

various passions threatening to envelop our lives, the camel walks along steadfast, peering all around as an all powerful monarch – the king of his mind and body – not tempted, bravely facing the adversary.

This formidable form of Behram Yazata appears generally to Type B1 and B2 persons.

Karta 5: The wild pig / boar

14. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual Yazatas?’ Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: ‘(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!’

15. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the fifth time in the shape of a beautiful boar, aggressive, sharp toothed, sharp clawed, smiting at once, well-fattened, grunting, smiting the rows of the army, strong, powerful, rushing all around. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): ‘I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The fifth visit of the Yazata Behram is in the form of a wild pig, or boar. The description is again slightly exaggerated. How can a boar be beautiful? Taavil reveals that the pig denotes someone full of passions. However, a beautiful pig denotes that the effect of Behram Yazata is such that even a base animal like a boar can be taught to control his passions. Many individuals desire to have a good family life. Many asked to be blessed with offspring. Some individuals get caught in extremely bad vices like drugs, or alcoholism. They want to break free, but lack the willpower. Some individuals desire to break the stranglehold of physical passions over their bodies and minds. For all these and more, Behram Yazata appears in this form, signifying that even the basest of men can rise and be exalted. The boar is described as being aggressive, sharp-toothed and sharp-clawed. This signifies that the basest of people have passions that can be ignited at any time. Behram Yazata instils in them the control they require over these passions. However, when control is lost, the passions attack at once. The boar is described as being well-fattened - fat with passions, grunting – showing the propensity to go out of control at any time, always at the forefront of any attack – smiting the rows of the army and ready to become the aggressor when provoked. Consequently, this form appears to people who want to control their basest passions, and wish to advance spiritually.

Karta 6: The youth of 15

16. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material

world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual Yazatas?’ Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: ‘(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!’

17. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the sixth time in the shape of a youth of fifteen (years of age), handsome, with shining eyes (and) small heels, beautiful. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): ‘I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The sixth karta marks a break, in that the form is not of an animal but a strapping youth of 15, on the brink of manhood, and at the end of the age of innocence. It is also the age when one can be most easily influenced. The youth may be tempted to commit any of the various sins we have categorised above. Seeking protection, the youth takes refuge in an Atash Behram, where the powerful circuits do not let evil beings enter and tempt the youth. The youth is described as being handsome – one who makes others fall in love with him. He has bright shining eyes, that attract others making them forget their worldly desires. The clear eyes also denote the ability to peer into the future. The boy has small heels, signifying that the worldly forces that tie us down to earth have no impact on him. The more we are drawn to materialism, the grosser the 16th *chakhra* or energy centre, which is based in the soles of our feet becomes. However, in the case of this youth, he is free of worldly desires and hence his 16th *chakhra* is fully developed, which is why he is denoted as being small heeled. His beauty is such that it entraps the onlooker and drives him to spiritual ecstasy.

Behram Yazata appears in this form mainly to persons of Type B and C, especially those who are crushed by familial disharmony. Similarly, those individuals who have decided to take the spiritual path are often harassed by evil spirits referred to in the Avesta as *pairika*- fairies, who try to reignite their conquered passions. Behram Yazata visits such individuals in this beautiful form and captivates them with his divine beauty. The individual then tries even harder to follow the spiritual disciplines of his religion so that he may get to see the form again and hence conquers his passions. Likewise, we have instances when great warriors or saints on the verge of achieving some greatness are trapped by some sexual advances that threaten to destroy them. In those instances too, Behram Yazata visits these warriors in this form and saves them from falling prey to evil.

Karta 7: The Bird

18. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual Yazatas?’ Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: ‘(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!’

19. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the seventh time in the shape of a bird, - the *Vareghna* bird, stout in the lower part and wounding in the upper part, who is the swiftest of all birds, the lightest of the flying ones.
20. He alone of (all) living creatures goes with the speed of an arrow. None other but only that bird goes quickly at the time of the first glittering dawn, wishing light for darkness, wishing arms for the unarmed.
21. He (the bird) touches upon the top of hills, he touches upon the top of mountains, he touches upon the depths of vales, he touches upon the summits of trees, listening to the voice of (other) birds. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): 'I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The seventh form of Behram Yazata is that of the *Vareghna* bird, which again bears an exaggerated description. Why would a bird wish for arms for the unarmed? Again we take recourse to *taavil*, which reveals that the bird signifies a free soul. One who is freed from the effects of the 7 planets, free of material desires, and waiting to fly to Ahura Mazda – that soul is denoted by the allegory of a bird. The *Vareghna* is a specific bird that works on the good side of nature and may be roughly compared to a raven or crow. The bird is described as being wounding in the upper part – that is, the top half of its body is sharp and small, letting it attack any adversary. It is described as having a stout lower part, that is, the lower part of its body is unwieldy and large. *Taavil* reveals that this bird stores the good work of others in its lower part and flies with it to give it to those who deserve it. It is like a courier, carrying goods fearlessly, and willing to give its life in defence. It will not rest till the goods are delivered to the intended recipients. The *Yasht* describes the bird as being swifter than other birds – signifying that it does the work entrusted to it in the quickest and most efficient manner. Its specific way of flying attracts the attention of the devotee, and draws him to where he needs to go.

The bird is described as being the first to fly up at dawn, arousing others. Night signifies the darkness of a man's despair; dawn signifies the coming of Behram Yazata to him. The bird wishes that this happens fast, that Behram Yazata will arm the unarmed man so that he may give fight to the evil ones. The bird is said to touch the summits of hills, mountains, trees and the depths of vales, listening for the voices of other birds. Other birds signify the other categories of souls who are working to reach Ahura Mazda. Their songs are nothing but the ardent prayers of these souls that they may reach their destination quickly. The depths of vales refer to the work of the *Ruvan* both during life and after death. The tops of hills and mountains refer to the souls of the liberated ones, and those working for the liberation of others. The tops of trees refer to the prayers of the ordinary people, thanking Ahura Mazda

for whatever good or bad they have received during the day. The bird thus listens to the complaints of all these souls, comforts them, wishing light where there is darkness, wishing for their collective state of enlightenment to reach higher heights through the agency of Behram Yazata.

This wondrous form of Behram Yazata appears generally to men who are on the verge of financial ruin caused by their own actions. Thus a really poor and needy man who desperately needs money to say, perform his children's Navjote, will be visited by this bird. As he roams around in despair, the particular method of flying of the VAREGHNA bird will draw the attention of that man. Once that happens, the bird usually draws the man to a place where enough money may be found to take care of his genuine needs. Such are the workings of Behram Yazata and the beauty of taavil!

Karta 8: The Wild Ram

22. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: 'O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual Yazatas?' Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: '(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!'

23. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the eighth time in the shape of a wild ram, beautiful, with horns bent downwards. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): 'I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The eighth form of Behram Yazata is a wild ram. This form occurs very rarely and visits those souls who are known as *dregumard* – the poor man – poor in the sense of one so highly evolved that he will not touch money or even talk about it. These generally do not stay in the vicinity of men since they would then need to come into contact with money or goods. Hence they roam around the forests, facing many difficulties. It is to the rescue of these souls, that Behram Yazata takes the form of the wild ram. The ram is again described as being beautiful – arousing divine ecstasy in the beholder. It is wild, that is, it cannot be influenced by anyone. Its horns are bent downwards. This signifies that although the *dregumard* is well armed, he will not use them. It denotes a certain degree of innocence that comes with spiritual evolution.

Karta 9: The Goat

24. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: 'O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material

world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual Yazatas?’ Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: ‘(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!’

25. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the ninth time in the shape of a beautiful buck, fighting with sharp horns. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): ‘I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The ninth form the Yazata Behram takes is that of a beautiful fighting buck, with sharp horns. Taavil reveals that the goat marks the culmination of a man’s journey to Ahura Mazda. It signifies that he has successfully collected all his fragments from the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms and is now ready to go onward to the great stage of *khaetwodath* - the ultimate union of the male and female soul. Again, the definition of the goat signifies that it is one which arouses divine love and ecstasy in the eyes of the beholder. Its sharp horns signify that it is ever ready to fight for the truth, to protect the holy. This form comes only to those highly evolved souls who have successfully collected all their soul fragments from the lower kingdoms. Behram Yazata gives these souls the required strength and divine energy to progress further ahead.

Karta 10: The Valiant Warrior

26. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Who is the most well armed of the spiritual Yazatas?’ Thereupon Ahura Mazda said: ‘(it is) the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, O Spitaman Zarathushtra!’

27. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, comes to him (who asks for his help), flying the tenth time in the shape of a radiant hero, beautiful, created by Mazda; he holds a sword with a golden hilt, inlaid with all (sorts) of embellishments. Thus does the Yazata Behram, created by Mazda, come (to him who asks for his help), bearing the *vohu-xhwareno* created by Mazda, the plain-*xhwareno* created by Mazda, and both Baeshyaza and Ama.

Then (he who is) the most courageous (Behram Yazata) speaks unto him (the seeker of help): ‘I am the most courageous in courage...

Then I shall destroy the malicious acts of all malicious persons...

On account of his splendour and glory him do I worship (who is) the Yazata Behram...

The final form of Behram Yazata is that of a valiant hero, a brave warrior. After progressing through the various stages of evolution, there comes a time when man needs to make the final thrust away from evil and into the lap of good. This final battle requires him to be of a most valiant nature. This help is provided by Behram Yazata in this final form. The warrior is described as being radiant – one who is aware of the deep mysteries behind the workings of Nature. He is created by Mazda, that is, he works according to the laws of *Mazdadhata* – making one remember that he has to go back to Ahura Mazda one day, even though today he may be far far away. He holds a sword in his hand – signifying that he has the spiritual authority and right to fight and break evil. The sword has a golden hilt, signifying that along with the authority he has the required wisdom to wield the sword in a just manner. He will give complete and unbiased justice. The embellishments on his sword signify the different divine powers he has picked up on his journey which he will now use for the betterment of others, and through that, himself. This final form appears only to those high souls who are on the threshold of liberation.

Kartas 1-10: Numerological interpretation

We have seen the progression of the different forms that Behram Yazata takes in order to help his devotees. Apart from the esoteric explanations given above, there is also a deeper numerological significance which can be gleaned by the application of *taavil*. The numerological explanation details man's quest to be one with Ahura Mazda and the various stages he has to pass through till he attains his goal.

Man's journey towards Ahura Mazda must begin with the realisation that there are certain deficiencies within himself that he needs to address. Hence the first form of Behram Yazata as the wind bears with it the rough forces of fortune that shake man out of his self induced stupor, and makes him realise that he has to overcome the passions of his body and mind. The second form of Behram Yazata as the bull brings with it the patience to bear a heavy load without complaint. This patience and the practice of spiritual disciplines makes the man faster in his spiritual journey and gives him the necessary speed – denoted through the third form of Behram Yazata as the horse. Along with speed, one requires wisdom - to know where to go. Man realises the futility of mere physical knowledge which only arouses false pride and starts imbibing the divine knowledge – *Khshnoom*. This stage is denoted by the fourth form of Behram Yazata – the camel. With the wisdom comes the realisation that one must overcome the trap of the 5 physical senses that keep pulling one down to the depths of human behaviour – denoted by the fifth form of Behram Yazata – the pig. Once this realisation dawns, man gives up the lure of the physical senses and works for the development of the spiritual senses, giving rise to a new self within him – denoted by the sixth form of Behram Yazata – the youth of fifteen. As the youth blossoms, he rises steadily, fulfilling his material obligations with the family and the world, freeing himself from the clutches of the seven planets and gravity, and allowing himself to fly towards Ahura Mazda – denoted by the seventh form of Behram Yazata – the *Vareghna* bird. As the free soul progresses it develops the unique innocence that comes only to very highly evolved souls – this is marked by the eighth form of Behram Yazata as the ram. As this innocent reaches new peaks, the individual slowly gathers all his soul fragments from the animal, mineral and vegetable kingdoms, and attains the state of completeness, which is marked by the ninth form of Behram Yazata as the goat. Finally, passing through all these stages, the fully developed man becomes as *hamkar* – a co-worker

of Ahura Mazda, helping others reach their own destinations. He acquires the divine authority to work for the salvation of others, which is manifested in the final form of Behram Yazata as the warrior, ever ready to safeguard the holy and punish the wicked.

This is the taavil of the numerological significance of the ten forms that Behram Yazata takes as he visits those that cry out to him. That is the reason that the first ten Kartas of the Yasht contain the somewhat exaggerated descriptions of the ten forms of Behram Yazata.

Kartas 11, 12 & 13 – Behram Yazata’s gifts to Prophet Zarathushtra

The next three Kartas of the Behram Yasht detail certain specific powers of Behram Yazata and also recount the various gifts given by Behram Yazata to Prophet Zarathushtra. These three Kartas are difficult to make sense of with a literal translation but with the application of taavil, we reveal some great truths. Let us see the literal translation first.

Karta 11: Behram Yazata & the gift of the eyesight of the Kara fish

28. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura, (who is) the giver of strength, giver of death, giver of salvation, provider of true friendship, provider of good connections. Holy Zarathushtra worshipped him (Behram Yazata) for victorious thinking, for victorious speaking, for victorious action, for victorious addressing, for victorious answering.
29. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, gave him (Zarathushtra) the fountain of truth, strength of two arms, health of the entire body, sturdiness of the entire body and that eyesight which the Kara fish, which lives in waters, possesses, who (the Kara fish) can see an object the size of a hair in the waters of the Rangha (river), whose ends lie afar, and (whose) depth is a thousand times the height of a man.

Here we see some further adjectives of Behram Yazata, who is described as the giver of strength, death and salvation. He provides true friendship and good connections. As man follows the path of truth and spiritual disciplines, moving up the chain of the ten forms we have seen earlier, the Yazata Behram invests in him certain rights and powers, which the man can use to further his own, and others’ progress. Once that man becomes a hamkar – a co-associate of Behram Yazata, he gains incredible strength – both physical and spiritual – hence the epithet *arshokarem* – giver of strength. Along with that strength comes the authority to punish wrongdoers – hence *marshokarem* – giver of death. Through these powers, the Yazata Behram and his co-associates lead one to salvation – hence the epithet *frashokarem* – giver of Frashokereiti. Both Behram Yazata and his co-associates stay alongside the struggling man forever, displaying true friendship, hence they are called *hvakshtem* – provider of true friendship. They help the struggling man make the right choices and move up the ladder of spiritual progress, and are therefore termed *hvayaonem* – providers of good connections. When Zarathushtra descended on the physical earth to help its onward progress, he attuned himself with Behram Yazata and imbibed these same properties from the Yazata. Hence the description of his worship.

The next paragraph is curious, to say the least. Apart from giving Zarathushtra the strength and sturdiness of the body, Behram Yazata gifts him the fountain of truth, and that eyesight which the Kara fish has. This fish is said to live in the Ranghu river, which river is said to be

difficult to cross and is as deep as the height of a thousand men. The Kara fish can perceive an object as fine as a hair in the depths of the Rangha river. This same amazing eyesight was gifted to Prophet Zarathushtra by Behram Yazata. What is the fountain of truth? What is the Kara fish? Where is the Ranghu River? What connection does it have with Zarathushtra?

The one and only way to reach Ahura Mazda is through the pursuit of Truth. Everything else is secondary. The most difficult spiritual discipline is not some arcane mystic understanding but the simple practice of saying the truth, always, without dilution and embellishments. Once mastery is achieved over this, everything else falls into place. The essential practice of the Zarathushtrian religion is to say the truth, from which arises the concept of Asha – righteousness. This fundamental role of truth is stressed over here by the use of the words *erezoish khao* – the Fountain of Truth. As Prophet Zarathushtra descends on the Earth, he bears this Divine Principle with him. And the Yazata Behram, as the most well armed of all the workers of Ahura Mazda, gifts this Divine Source to that form of the Prophet that descends on the earth.

We now come to the River Ranghu and the Kara fish. Various scholars have speculated as to the geographical locations of the numerous seas, rivers, mountains and cities mentioned in the Avesta. While Spiegel, Justi and Geiger have narrowed down Ranghu to the River Xaxartes, Harlez takes it as the River Oxus, while Darmesteter prefers the River Tigris. However, taavil reveals a totally different view. The river Ranghu refers to the entire passage of time in the physical cosmos (Nisti). As it is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the entire passage of time from creation to Frashokereiti, the river is mentioned as being *durae-parayao* – difficult to cross, whose ends lie afar. The entire cosmos moves in a circle of 4 eons, which is denoted by saying that the river has a depth of the height of one thousand noble warriors. 1000 contains 4 digits, each of which stands for the 4 eons.

The Kara fish is mentioned in other parts of the Avesta too. It is said to guard the white Haoma plant. The white Haoma plant refers to the most exalted nature of divine Truth which all of us will one day achieve. The Kara fish is that agency of Ahura Mazda which can peer into the 4 eons of time, and within an instant recognise the past, present and future of every single item of creation – from a speck of dust to the grandest Yazata. It keeps a check on all these creations and helps them achieve the same exalted stature that the white Haoma has. This amazing power of the Kara organism is described in lay terms as powerful eyesight which can see even an item as thin as a hair. Since time itself flows endlessly, it is described as the river Ranghu. And since the Kara entity lives throughout the passage of the river of time, it is called a fish. When Prophet Zarathushtra descends on the Earth, the Yazata Behram gifts him the same ability of the Kara – to peer into the 4 eons of time and recognise the past, present and future of each and every article of creation – and thus to guide the progress of man and all other creation. Only now can we understand the difference between a literal translation and the beauty of taavil!

Karta 12: Behram Yazata & the gift of the eyesight of the Horse

30. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura, (who is) the giver of strength, giver of death, giver of salvation...
31. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, gave him (Zarathushtra) the fountain of truth, strength of two arms, health of the entire body, sturdiness of the entire body and that

eyesight which the Horse possesses, who (the horse) in a dark and still night full of clouds sees a horse's hair lying on the ground, (and can recognise) what is the head and the end (of the hair).

A similar construct like the earlier Karta, the twelfth Karta says that in addition to the earlier properties, Behram Yazata gifted Zarathushtra the eyesight which a horse possesses. But this seems to be a particularly gifted horse than can on a dark and overcast night see another horse's hair lying on the ground and even make out which is the head and which is the end part of the hair!

Eyesight, as we know, is controlled by the contraction and dilation of the iris. This contraction and dilution is done through the help of two sets of muscles – one set located inside the eye, and another set outside the eye. Both these sets must work together to provide the best eyesight. In humans, the interior muscles do not work – only the exterior ones do, as a result of which, we need to use spectacles to correct our vision, after a certain age. However, in case of animals, both sets of muscles work in unison, to provide the best long and short sight. Among animals, the horse has got acute eyesight. We are aware of the chemistry that exists between a well trained horse and its owner. Even the *Shahnameh* is filled with the accounts of the deep bonding between the mighty Rostam and his valiant steed Raksh. The horse is seemingly able to gauge the mood of its owner and will adjust its speed and ride accordingly. When the owner rides the horse, the horse's keen eyesight enables it to ride without stepping on obstacles which may mar its owner's ride. Similarly, in battle, a cavalry horse carries its warrior with extreme care, stepping over the mass of other men and animals on the battlefield with consummate ease. Even in a midnight ambush, the horse will move silently to its target with unerring accuracy. In other words, a good horse is an invaluable aid to a man.

In the same way, in our long journey to Ahura Mazda, we have to develop certain faculties that will enable us to proceed faster, and with fewer mistakes. As a horse guides its owner to the right spot, so also Behram Yazata provides his devotee with the correct and keen eyesight that will enable him to see his murky fate – which is denoted by the dark and cloudy night, and make him aware of the various pitfalls he must avoid. So man becomes aware of even his smallest shortcomings – denoted by the horse's hair, and can immediately make out what he should correct, and what he should avoid – denoted by the head and the end of the hair. In the same way, when Prophet Zarathushtra descended on this earth, the Yazata Behram gifted him the same eyesight that would enable him to see the fate of the current *Zarvane daregho khadata*¹, and devise the various means to combat the force of evil and ensure the stability

¹ The Avesta mentions three distinct concepts of time: *Zarvane Akarne* – Endless time that encompasses the entire creation; *Zarvane daregho khadata* – one cycle of 81,000 years through which the earth passes from creation to destruction; and *Zarvane thwashe khadata* – an individual's one cycle of birth to death. The entire creation thus moves within the endless time – *Zarvane Akarne*, within which are the cycles of the Earth – *Zarvane daregho khadata* and man's individual time cycle – *Zarvane thwashe khadata*.

The secret of understanding the Avesta lies in understanding what happens in one *Zarvane daregho khadata*. The Earth goes through a cycle of birth to destruction that lasts for 81,000 years. At the end of this cycle, a global deluge submerges the Earth. Before that happens, the last saviour – *Saoshyans* or *Soshyos* appears on the earth, and gathers the best amongst god's creations and takes them to a place where the waters cannot submerge them. The Earth is then flooded – given a spiritual bath as it were, which lasts for a few thousand years. Then when the waters recede, the descendants of the group of souls that were taken up by *Soshyos* descend on the Earth to start life afresh. Before that happens, however, the *Daevas* – the evil ones descend on the Earth too and start their nefarious activities. The aim of the *Daevas* is to despoil the Earth and make it unsuited for humans to

and onward progress of man and other creations. In essence, Zarathushtra, through the agency of Behram Yazata has provided us with a useful horse that we can ride on to meet Ahura Mazda.

Karta 13: Behram Yazata & the gift of the eyesight of the golden collared vulture

32. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura, (who is) the giver of strength, giver of death, giver of salvation...
33. The Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, gave him (Zarathushtra) the fountain of truth, strength of two arms, health of the entire body, sturdiness of the entire body and that eyesight which the vulture with a golden collar possesses, who (the vulture) sees from nine times the height of a city, a piece of flesh as thick as a fist, in the same way as (it sees) the brightness of a shining needle as well as its point.

The third gift of Behram Yazata to Prophet Zarathushtra seems to be the keen eyesight of the golden collared vulture, which flying as high as nine cities stacked one on top of another can discern a piece of flesh as small as a fist or the gleam of a needle and its tip. We are aware of the importance of the role of the vulture, not only in our religion, but also in Nature as the scavenger par excellence. The vulture has keen eyesight and an amazing propensity to arrive at a spot where any carrion lies and swiftly finishing it off, thereby avoiding the spread of contagion and pollution. These sombre undertakers of nature arrive uninvited and depart without fuss, after doing a thorough job. It is only when we become aware of the absence of vultures, do we realise how important they are for us, especially Parsees.

advance spiritually. To counter this, the leader of the first group of humans that descend on the Earth – *Gayomard* or *Kayumars* gives a strong challenge to the Daevas – fighting with them with all his strength. This fight is then carried on by his descendents including *Hoshang*, *Tehmurasp*, *Jamshid*, *Faridun*, who are all ably assisted by the great paladin family of *Sam*, *Nariman*, *Rustam* and *Zaal*.

This scenario goes on for the first nearly 4000 years of every Zarvane daregho khadata. Despite their best efforts, the great heroes can control the evil forces up to only a certain extent. When the efforts of the evil ones seem to be on the verge of success, when the load on Mother earth becomes too much to bear, when it seems that everything is lost and there is no hope for man – at that crucial time in Earth's history Zarathushtra descends on the Earth. He then severely curtails the activities of the Daevas and renders them powerless to a large extent. He establishes the divine *Pav-Mahel*: the palace of purity that draws Ahura Mazda's blessings on the Earth and distributes them to Zoroastrians. He sets up various institutions that will perform great deeds in nature and from which Zoroastrians will draw sustenance for thousands of years to come.

After Zarathushtra, his tradition is carried on by his worthy successors and the Dasturs. Then, 14000 years after the start of the Zarvane daregho khadata, the Earth again goes through a period of severe turmoil and unrest. The forces of evil rise up again and threaten to destroy creation. At that point, the first of the three saviours descends on the Earth and rectifies matters. We are living in those troubled times today – a time when the hope of the advent of the *Rainidar* – the Great Restorer is in the minds and hearts of every true Zoroastrian. After a period that will witness the resurrection of the Zoroastrian religion and when its rich culture and heritage will once again shine all through the world, the earth will once again be caught in the vice of evil – the second '*qayamat*'. At this time, the second saviour will descend on the Earth to rein in the evil that has crossed reasonable limits. Finally, at the end of 81,000 years, the evil goes so much out of control that the Earth needs to be given a spiritual bath. At this time, the final saviour – Soshyos descends and performs his function as described before.

This is the way the history of the Earth is linked to the progress of man – as each Zarvane daregho khadata passes, man evolves and purifies himself, taking him one step closer to Ahura Mazda. At the same time, the earth also purifies herself and takes one more step to Frashokereiti – the Final Union with Ahura Mazda.

One of the main missions of Prophet Zarathushtra on this earth was to arrest the spread of evil on the planet, which had reached alarming proportions. In this task, he was helped by Behram Yazata, who gave him the gift of the eyesight of a vulture – that is, he gave Zarathushtra the gift of being able to search the entire Earth in a fraction of a second and to pinpoint even the smallest amount of contagion, corruption or evil and despatch his associates to eradicate it. This is the taavil behind the gifts of three different kinds of eyesight that Behram Yazata gave to Prophet Zarathushtra.

Karta 14: The miraculous bird – *Pesho-Parena*

Karta 14 has a long description of a miraculous bird called the *Pesho-Parena*, which some scholars have unfortunately and wrongly translated as ‘owl’. The description of this bird and its miraculous properties seem totally mythical and even unbelievable. We shall first see the literal translation and then try to understand the taavil.

34. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, creator of the material world, O Holy One! When I am become one (who is) spoken against (or) am under the use of spells, what is the remedy for it?’
35. Then Ahura Mazda replied: ‘You should seek the feathers of the bird Pesho-Parena, fluttering the wings, O Spitaman Zarathushtra! With that feather you should rub (your) body; with that feather you should drive away your opponent by curses.
36. No one can smite (that) fortunate man or can harass him who holds the feather of that strong bird, or the bones of that strong bird; first it brings homage for him, first the glories, it maintains help – the feather of the bird of birds.
37. (Even) the Lord of the rulers, (or) the master of the country, (or) the killer of a hundred warriors cannot smite (the bird), the (bird) alone can smite all of them and exercise superiority (over them).
38. Just as (they are afraid) of me (Behram Yazata), (in the same way) all are afraid of the keeper of (that) feather. (Because of) the courage and victory (that are) established in him and (by means of) the mental faculty (which is) engrafted (in his) body, all opponents and enemies are afraid of him.
39. Whom (that bird or the keeper of its feather) the lords desire, the sons of the lords shall desire, (and whom) the members of the family of King Kaikhushroo desired, King Kai Kaus desired, whom the horse desires, whom the load bearing camel desires, whom the navigable water desires.
40. Whom (the bird Pesho-Parena) the mighty Thraetaona (King Faridun) carried, who (Faridun) killed the evil Zohak, having three mouths, three heads, six eyes, a thousand skills, very powerful, devilish Druj, evil, wicked for the people of the world, whom Angra Mainyu created as a very strong Druj in the material world for the destruction of the worlds of righteousness.

For every successful man, there are ten others waiting in the wings to pull him down. Just as a flourishing businessman has his share of competitors and detractors, so also in the case of a

pious man who is trying to go ahead on the road to meet Ahura Mazda, various evil beings try to pull him down. These evil beings make use of spells and incantations to harass the holy man. Thus it is asked at the beginning of the 14th Karta, that when one is spoken against – *aiwisansto*, or when one comes under the influence of evil spells – *aiwishmareto*, what should one do? How should the holy man protect himself? Ahura Mazda replies that such a person should search for the miraculous bird Pesho-Parena that hurts with its wings, take its feather, and rub it over his body.

Then follows a description of the qualities of the Pesho-Parena, and a list of the various persons who asked it for help. The bird is said to be extremely strong, and one whose need is felt by even the best warriors as well as holy men. Its utility is such that it achieves a near worshipful position. Even a mighty king or a warrior who has defeated one hundred other warriors cannot defeat this bird, although the bird can surely defeat them without much effort. Hence, as soon as it is sighted, the warriors salute this bird, giving it great respect. Even a saintly person, one who has understood the mysteries of nature and Ahura Mazda cannot ignore the greatness of the mighty Pesho-Parena. It is thus natural that the bird is desired by many in this world. Should the bird sit on the back of a horse, the horse shall feel no fatigue and can run on for hours together. Should the Pesho-Parena sit on the back of a load bearing camel, even the camel wishes that the bird should never get up since the load on its back seems to reduce miraculously. Seaworthy sailors, who chart their vessels in deep waters pray for the Pesho-Parena to appear on their ship since then the ship will be safe in even the fiercest seas. Such is the power of this bird that it is not necessary for the bird to be present. Even a man possessing the feather of this bird would be able to take all its benefits as though the bird itself were with him. Great warriors have worshipped this bird in the past, warriors such as the mighty King Kaikhushroo, and others of his dynasty. Even the greatest warrior – Thraetaona – King Faridun, who destroyed the evil Zohak, needed the help of the Pesho-Parena. This is the description of the Pesho-Parena in the Behram Yasht.

It would be safe to say that this bird has not been understood at all by modern philology. Its features are such that they surpass rational belief. Taavil explains that the Pesho-Parena is one of the most fearsome and effective weapons of Ahura Mazda that can be witnessed by only the most advanced of all souls. Its nature is such that a normal person will refuse to believe in its existence. Hence he can scarcely take its benefit. But the fact is that this great bird is in existence even today, helping the highly advanced souls, the *Abeds*, in their quest for reaching perfection. The bird has the capacity to heal any physical, mental, emotional or spiritual ills in any person. A mere rubbing of its feather is enough to make the ailment disappear. When man progresses on the spiritual path and is about to finish his obligations with other humans, he faces several obstacles which are a result of the sins of his previous births. At this time, his spiritual master entrusts his welfare to the Pesho-Parena bird, which removes all these obstacles. Hence the bird is for those who have finished the process of the fifth *Gahambar* – the period of give and take, and are proceeding on to the sixth *Gahambar* – salvation. It is but natural that we don't see this bird today because we are far from completing the fifth *Gahambar*. Still, if we were to pray the Behram Yasht with full faith and pass a thought to this great bird while reciting this karta, it is natural that we would derive some benefits. When man tries to rise above the material and proceed to the spiritual, he finds the wall separating the two to be very high and almost impossible to cross. He tries, but knows he will fail. At this time, he seeks the help of the Pesho-Parena, who immediately and effortlessly lifts him from his morass and passes him over to the spiritual side. It is only such people who can understand the power of this bird and the important position it occupies. For the rest of us, these may seem like fairy tales. Yet in nature there are no fairy tales – there are

only limits to our understanding which limits are gradually raised as we progress ahead. It is only when we reach the spiritual side, when our eyes are able to perceive the reality, and not the apparent reality we see due to our past sins that we realise what a towering personality the Pesho-Parena is. It is thus sufficient to say that this bird is outside our pale of understanding and indeed, beyond our reach.

Karta 15: The miraculous bird – Saena

41. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. The Yazata Behram spreads the glory around the house with its wealth in cattle, just as that great bird Saena (protects with its wings), just as big clouds full of water cover the mountains.

This short karta describes the Saena bird, which is known as the *Simurgh* in the Shah Nameh. The Simurgh bird is famous in the Shah Nameh for the help it gives to the great warrior Rustam and his father Zaal. The Simurgh is also an important ally of Yazata Behram like the Pesho-Parena. Rustam was the very embodiment of Behram Yazata on earth, and hence the Simurgh was duty bound to help him in all his fights. In the most grievous fight of his career against the mighty *Asfandiar*, both Rustam and his celebrated mount Raksh were sorely wounded by the powerful *Fshusho-manthra* weapons of Asfandiar. At this time, Zaal called upon the Simurgh, which appeared, took Rustam and Raksh and flew with them to the sea of China, where a certain plant grew with which it healed their wounds, and flew them back to Iran ready for the next day's battle. In the morning when Rustam appeared on the scene to continue the fight, Asfandiar was amazed to see the old hero in top form after the beating he had taken the previous day. Again this description is not to be taken as an exaggeration or a fairy tale. It points to the giant stature of the Simurgh. When this mighty bird flies, it does so at a great height. Its giant stature creates a huge shadow which covers the largest mountains, just as rain clouds cover the mountains. Just as the Pesho-Parena, the Simurgh is not for the common man. Hence the description in the Yasht that it spreads the glory around the house of one whose wealth is in cattle. This is not to be taken as a shepherd's house, but rather the house of a *Pasupach* man – that is, one who has collected all the fragments of his soul from the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms and is ready to integrate them with his own soul. Hence the normal man will never be able to spot the Simurgh. If by some chance event he happens to observe even the shadow of this mighty bird, the man will either lose his senses or attain total salvation! In essence, these two birds are the link between the physical and the spiritual. Hence we may say that they are, yet they are not!

Karta 16: The rules of invocation of Behram Yazata

42. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: 'O Ahura Mazda, Most Beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world, O Holy One! Where is the invocation of Behram? Where (his) adoration? Where (his) praise?
43. Thereupon spoke Ahura Mazda: 'When armies meet together, O Spitaman Zarathushtra, in proper array, each one (and when) those who are carried (as victors) are not (finally) carried, those who are smitten are not (finally) smitten.

44. (Then) do you hold four feathers on either side of the way. Whichever of the two (sides) shall worship first, that side, the well shaped, well grown Ama, and the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura shall accompany with protection.
45. I pray for Ama and the Yazata Behram, the two protectors, the two defenders, the two maintainers, the two (wings) flutter up, the two flutter away, the two flutter forth, the two touch (fly), the two touch around, the two touch forth.
46. O Zarathushtra! You should not teach this Manthras (to anyone) except to the father or the son, to the brother or the relative of the priestly class – the nourishers (of the soul). These are those words which are powerful and strong, they are powerful in assembly, they are powerful in victory, they are powerful in healing. These are the words which save one whose head is condemned (on account of sins) and (which) turns off even the upraised weapon.

This slightly long karta seems to have two disjoint subjects combined in one. The first topic seems to be the help Behram Yazata provides to warring armies, while the second topic deals with not teaching the holy Manthras to anyone. Let us try to analyse this karta and reveal the real meaning through the application of taavil. The karta opens with Zarathushtra asking Ahura Mazda as to the whereabouts of the invocation , adoration and praise of the Yazata Behram. The key words used are, which are generally translated as invocation, adoration and praise respectively, all being derived from the common root ‘*stu*’ to praise. However taavil reveals a deeper meaning in these three words.

There are different ways of praying, or asking for help from divine agencies. The first way is to completely devote our minds to one divine being, say, Behram Yazata and pray the specified prayer – the Behram Yasht in this case, at a particular time every single day for a period of forty days, maintaining strict levels of physical and spiritual purity during that period. At the end of this period, the Yazata should appear to the devotee in any of the ten forms we have examined in the first ten Kartas of this Yasht. Hence a connection has been established between the devotee and the divine being. Now to maintain this connection for a prolonged period, the devotee keeps on repeating or chanting a particular name or phrase of the Avesta at all times of his daily life. By doing so, the devotee remains in constant contact with the divine being, and receives immense spiritual benefit. The devotee is able to listen to the Divine Song of Behram Yazata as the Yazata goes about his divine tasks. The devotee’s questions are answered easily and he advances very rapidly. This is the highest method of invocation and is known in the Avesta as *nama-azbaitish*.

When a devotee understands the mystic working of a particular Yazata through the application of taavil and the esoteric knowledge of *Khshnoom*, and keeps his thoughts on those functions all the time, at the same time also reciting the necessary prayers, then that method is called *upastuitish*. Here the devotee receives help from the Yazata but is unable to hear his Divine Song. Yet the devotee is confident that with his future progress, he will definitely be able to achieve that goal.

Finally, when a devotee is unable to run his thoughts on the divine work of the Yazata, but merely prays the Behram Yazata consistently, and also has the sacred baj ceremony performed in honour of Behram Yazata, then this method is called *nistuitish*. Here of course the devotee is unable to maintain constant contact with the Yazata but nonetheless is able to receive help from the Yazata when he is eligible for it. These are the different ways in which

the invocation of Behram Yazata can be done. The nama-azbaitish method is the most difficult and can be done only by very highly evolved souls who are very close to their individual salvation. The other two methods can be attempted by ordinary souls. Even at this low level, there is no doubt that the Yazata directly does help the devotee.

Having understood these different methods of invocation we now go back to the karta. After having received these answers as to the methods of invocation, the karta explains that both Behram and Ama Yazatas stand ready to help those armies which are lined up, facing each other. Whichever army first asks for their help receive the same. Even within the armies, whichever soldier individually asks for help from Behram Yazata receives it. If they possess the feather of the Pesho-Parena bird or the Saena bird, then they receive more help. However, the moot question is – which armies are we referring to and what fights are these? Taavil reveals that this reference is not only to physical battles, but actually refers to the ongoing struggle that happens within our bodies and our minds – the struggle between good and evil. This reference is hence to our own struggle to overcome our passions and advance on the spiritual path. The various words used in this karta to refer to the help Behram Yazata gives us all point to this fact. We may be trapped in our passions, or someone may be purposely harassing us, or we may be in some deep financial or other crisis. The words *adadhvaozen*, *vidhvaozen*, *fradhvaozen*, *amerezen*, *vimarezen* etc are all derived from the root *zan* to smite, and indicate the different ways in which the Yazata Behram helps us overcome our most difficult enemy – our own mind.

In fact, taavil reveals to us that the Manthras of this particular karta are themselves the most potent formulas for defeating the enemy that resides within. Hence the next paragraph says that these Manthras should not be revealed to anyone but one's own family members – that is they should not be taken lightly. The powerful Manthras of this karta help different people in different ways – depending on the method used for invocation – whether it is *nama-azbaitish* or *upastuitish* or *nistuitish*. Depending in the method used, depending on the personal power of the individual wielding them, these Manthras will work their wonder in different ways.

Karta 17: The curse of Behram Yazata on evil doers

47. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura, who adorns in the proper (battle) and array, he inquires here and there with Mithra and Rashnu: 'who lies unto Mithra? Who abandons Rashnu? To whom shall I, the powerful one give illness and death?'
48. Thereupon spoke Ahura Mazda: 'If men would worship the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura, lawfully as laid down by his most lawful worship and adoration on account of the best Asha, (then) a hostile army will never be moving forward into the Aryan countries, nor affliction, nor leprosy, nor revenge, nor the chariots of the army, nor the uplifted banner (of the army).'
49. Zarathushtra asked Him (Ahura Mazda): 'O Ahura Mazda, what indeed is the most lawful worship and adoration of the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura on account of the best Asha?'
50. Then Ahura Mazda replied: 'The Aryan countries should offer up libations unto him, the Aryan countries should spread the Barsom, the Aryan countries should cook for

him a head of cattle, either of white colour or blood colour, or of one and the same colour, whatever the colour.’

51. ‘Let not a murderer partake of that (libation), nor an immoral woman, nor an idle man who does not chant the Gathas, who destroys the world, who is opposing the religion which is of Ahura Mazda revealed by Zarathushtra.’
52. ‘If a murderer or an immoral woman, or an idle man who does not chant the Gathas, who destroys the world, who is opposing the religion which is of Ahura Mazda revealed by Zarathushtra would partake of it (the libation) then the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura takes back his healing power.’
53. ‘Similarly, calamities shall befall the Aryan countries, similarly the armies shall attack the Aryan countries, similarly the Aryan countries shall be smitten by 50 fold smiting and 100 fold; by 100 fold smiting and 1000 fold; by 1000 fold smiting and 10,000 fold; by 10,000 fold smiting and innumerable smiting.’
54. Thereupon the Yazata Behram created by Ahura said thus: ‘O men! The soul of the Earth, created by wisdom, (is) not (now) worthy of worship, worthy of adoration, since now the Vyambura demons, (wicked) men, demon worshippers make blood flow and spill (the evil) through spilling.’
55. ‘Since now the Vyambura demons, (wicked) men, demon worshippers bring to the fire (the wood of) this plant which is called Haperesi by name, that wood which is called Nemetka by name.’
56. ‘Since now the Vyambura demons, (wicked) men, demon worshippers bend (their) backs, stretch (their) waists, arrange all (their) limbs (so that) the (smite) of the demons appear (to smite, but) they smite not; the killers appear (to kill, but) they kill not, since the Vyambura demons, (wicked) men, demon worshippers confound (their) intellect, and they turn away their eyesight.’

This is one of the most confusing Kartas of the Behram Yasht and has not been understood properly at all. Many scholars have pointed to this karta, specifically paragraph 50 as a reference to bloody sacrifices. However, taavil reveals a totally different meaning which we shall try to imbibe. The karta begins with the Yazata Behram roaming around the battle field inquiring as to who are the people who have lied to Mithra, or who have abandoned Rashnu. As in the earlier karta, the lined up army is not to be construed as a physical army but as the evil forces within our bodies, which tempt us into doing evil. The most difficult spiritual exercise is undoubtedly to speak the truth. The Yazata Mithra (Meher yazad) is the supreme embodiment of Divine Truth. Hence when a person lies, he puts a spanner, however insignificant, in the working of Meher yazad. Similarly, truth gives rise to divine law and order, which is embodied by the Yazata Rashnu – the just. Hence when a person lies, disorder is also created in nature. When this happens, Behram Yazata is unable to help these individuals, who get trapped further and further in their maze of lies and deceit. Their give and take obligations get murkier and as a result they suffer from other family members and society in general. However, an individual’s evil affects not only him but also the whole society and country. Hence it is said in the karta that the Aryan countries will be ravaged by attacks from enemies, the citizens will get serious diseases like leprosy and other contagious forms, the entire culture and civilization of the Aryan countries will be destroyed. Similarly,

the Aryan countries referred to in this karta also imply our own individual ultra-physical bodies where the Divine Energy centres – the Chakhras are located. When man goes against Mithra and Rashnu, he causes grievous hurt to his own spiritual bodies and their further development. The hostile evil forces lying within the body get activated and strengthened by these acts and start wreaking havoc within our physical body giving rise to severe ailments like leprosy and other contagious diseases. When this goes beyond a specific tolerance level, Behram Yazata steps in as the stern teacher and proceeds to rectify this by some harsh steps. Thus if men were to properly obey the dictates of Behram Yazata, all this would never happen. Man has to help Behram Yazata in this. How? That is revealed in the following paragraphs of this karta.

Basically humans can be divided into two broad groups – those who are working towards their individual salvation – known technically as the *Nasupach* group, and those who are very close to or have already achieved their individual salvation – called the *Pasupach* group. Both these groups help Behram Yazata and Ahura Mazda in different ways. These different ways are explained in paragraphs 48 and 50 respectively. The Nasupach group helps Behram Yazata by following Truth and Order – that is by following the spiritual exercises of the religion – known as Tarikats, the primary of them being Truth and Righteousness. For the Pasupach group, the main method of helping Behram Yazata is by performing the Pasupach ceremony. This Pasupach ceremony has not been understood by modern religious studies. Every man's Urvan or soul has several fragments which are distributed in a particular ratio among the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdom². When man progresses on the spiritual path, these fragments get attracted to the human soul and consolidate together. When all the fragments are consolidated, they take the form of an innocent lamb. The Pasupach ceremony is that mystical event whereby the lamb is integrated into the body of the human. This has nothing to do with animal sacrifice or eating meat.

Hence paragraph 50 of this karta states that the Pasupach group of people should offer libations and 'cook the head of cattle'. There are three levels of the Pasupach ceremony which are here referred to as cooking the head of three different colours of cattle. When one Pasupach ceremony is performed, the entire creation receives a thrust forward. But in times like today, ordinary men refuse to even believe of the existence of the Pasupach group and this divine ceremony. Studies of the religion pour scorn on such references; reformists use it as a stick to beat the orthodox, claiming that they live in an age of animal sacrifices and other such heathen customs. When this happens, the repercussions are terrible – and they are illustrated in paragraph 51, 52 and 53 of this karta. When the collective mentality of the citizens refuse to believe in the Pasupach group, and through their lies and deceit come in the way of the progress of these exalted souls, at that time Behram Yazata strikes back in a

² The fragmentation of the soul is a difficult concept to understand and explain. The process started at the time of the beginning of creation, and is governed by the laws of decimalization – called *daseme stutam* in the Gathas. The every human's soul has a counterpart in the opposite sex. Further, 1/10th part of the human soul has been fragmented and distributed in the animal kingdom, 1/100th part of the human soul has been fragmented and distributed in the vegetable kingdom and 1/1000th part of the human soul has been fragmented and distributed in the mineral kingdom. When man progresses on the path towards Ahura Mazda, the fragments of the lower kingdom get attracted to their original part and slowly begin the process of consolidation and integration. When all the parts of the soul from the lower kingdom have been consolidated they take the form of the lamb. The ceremony of integrating the lamb within the human body is called *Pasupach*. This ceremony takes place on those parts of this Earth which are not in common view. Similarly, when the soul progresses even further, the counterpart of the opposite sex is also attracted and finally they come together. The ceremony of the merging of the female and the male part of the soul is known as *Khaetwodath*. The ceremony of Khaetwodath takes place in the higher realms.

terrible form. Various natural disasters wreak havoc in the country, dreaded diseases like leprosy and epidemics effect the entire population, the rains fail, crops perish, hunger and starvation strikes. No medicines work, referred to in paragraph 50 as Behram Yazata taking away the healing power.

As a result of all this, the Vyambura demon gets activated. Vyambura is that demon who revels in tearing apart the moral, social and spiritual fabric of a human or the entire society. His very name is derived from the root 'to tear'. He encourages man not to heed the voice of conscience. Man thus creates more evil. The spiritual component of his blood decreases and the passionate part of the blood increases, causing his passions to overflow – referred to in paragraph 54 as the spilling of blood. Every man has his own personal development tree – called the *Van-e-Zvit-bish*. As man progresses, this tree sprouts seeds – his own children who take his work forward. But in this case, man chops of his own development tree and instead adopts the evil path – referred to in paragraph 55 as bringing the wood of the Haperesi and Nemetka trees. A dry and sweet smelling tree will light an efficient fire and be smoke free – that is, our path to salvation will be made clear by adopting the spiritual path. But when man ignores the voice of his conscience and takes the wrong path – referred to here as bringing the wood of the Haperesi and Nemetka trees, he is unable to light an efficient fire. The bad smoke from these noxious woods blinds the man – blurring his path to salvation and making him take the wrong course.

Because of these unbearable levels of evil, the back of the evil man gets bent. Vyambura and his followers make the evil man stretch his waist – that is, cause him great hardships. Their limbs are turned such that they are unable to do any good. Their intellect gets clouded, they fail to see reason, they leave their religion, make others leave their religion and attempt to 'convert' people to their faith. The enemies of the country group together and attack the Aryan country, utter chaos and confusion reigns. The culture and vibrancy of the civilization is destroyed. The load on Mother Earth is so great that even the ceremonies performed have no effect. So great is the carnage and so complete is the rout that historians are not even able to say that this civilization existed!

At this time the few good people left appeal to Behram Yazata to step in and stem the rot. They perform his righteous worship through the practice of truth and order. Then Behram Yazata steps in and vanquishes the Vyambura demons, eases the load of evil on Mother Earth, straightens the backs of those evil followers with his strict 'physio-therapy' medicine and brings their minds back to the good path. This is the deep meaning behind this mystic and much misunderstood karta.

Karta 18: Behram Yazata and Haoma

57. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. I keep with me Haoma (who) purifies impurity. I keep with me Haoma (who is) victorious. I keep with me Haoma (who is) the protector of good (things) and I keep with me (Haoma who is) the protector of the body. Whosoever drinks (the consecrated) Haoma will secure escape from the enemy in battle (and) will gain success over him.
58. So that I may conquer this army (of my enemy), so that I may strike down this army (of my enemy), so that I may subjugate this army (of my enemy) which comes behind me.

The 18th karta of the Behram Yasht deals primarily with the role that Haoma plays when working together with the Yazata Behram. There are many facets to Haoma, and different facets are highlighted at different parts of the Avesta. This karta shows how both groups of humans – the Pasupach as well as the Nasupach can gain further access and help from the Yazata Behram when they lawfully worship Haoma. The worship and attunement of Haoma is done mainly through the Haoma ceremony which is the major part of the Yasna ceremony. The karta explains that Haoma is contained in all the blessings which descend on this earth and which help in sustaining the earth and all its inhabitants as well as taking them closer to Ahura Mazda. The Yazata Behram helps Haoma sustain these blessings on this Earth due to the fact that these two divine entities are always attuned with each other. Due to this fact, Haoma also helps men sustain the good blessings of Ahura Mazda within their bodies – which is why he is referred to as the healer and the sustainer. This being the case, it is obvious the man can take help of Haoma when he is threatened by the hostile army – the evil which lurks within his own body. This evil can be of various forms. In the Nasupach group it could be the collective result of the sins committed in previous births, whereas in the Pasupach group it could be help in fighting with and destroying the major evil doers who are termed as demons in many passages of the Shah Nameh. Sometimes the Shah Nameh shows the good warriors achieving incredible successes over enemies far more powerful than them. This can now be explained with the understanding that because of their practice of the religion and its main ceremonies like the Yasna, Haoma and the Yazata Behram together create a formidable power which the warrior uses to defeat his more powerful adversaries.

Thus the devotee praying this karta wishes that the contact between Haoma and the Yazata Behram be always maintained, specifically within his own body through the drinking of the sacred Haoma water created during the Yasna ceremony. As the devotee drinks the Haoma juice, it enters his physical body and from there it is absorbed by the ultra-physical bodies, including the Chakhras as well as the Urvan. The Haoma juice helps in lifting the veil of drowsiness of the Urvan in this current life and heightens the consciousness of the individual. At the same time, the Haoma juice also improves the physical and mental health of the devotee and helps him in his fight to defeat the evil that lurks within his body and which threatens to engulf him at any time.

Karta 19: Behram Yazata and the wish for a good progeny

59. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. The progeny of the lord, the Prince, the Princes of the Lords of Myriads possess the stone (as an amulet) so that it (the progeny) become courageous, victorious by name; it becomes victorious, courageous by name.

60. So that I may conquer this army (of my enemy), so that I may strike down this army (of my enemy), so that I may subjugate this army (of my enemy) which comes behind me.

(The translation of karta 59 is highly doubtful. Ervad Kanga is unable to translate this paragraph, so also Darmesteter in the Sacred Books of the East series.)

The contents of this karta are difficult to explain grammatically. However taavil reveals a very deep meaning. The devotee wishes in this karta for a child which will help him become

victorious and courageous and conquer the enemy that lurks within. One of the most important events in a man's life is his marriage, and the subsequent birth of children. Taavil reveals that if one follows the good religion faithfully, and observes all the spiritual disciplines, the Tarikats, as far as possible, then the offspring which is produced has even greater goodness than its parents. This desire to achieve genetic as well as spiritual superiority of one generation over the other is one of the key reasons for the practice of *boonak pasbani* – the preservation of the seed. We are aware the Fire is known in the Avesta as the son of Ahura Mazda. The reason is because Fire is that agency that performs the work of Ahura Mazda in the best manner. Hence a son is one who further achieves the objectives of his father, who works solely for the welfare and wish of his father. In doing so, he ensures that his own children will be of even higher calibre than him and take forward his duties.

The role of the child is of utmost importance after the death of an individual, because it is now the responsibility of the child to ensure the welfare and further progress of the soul of his deceased parents. Hence it is enjoined that the most serious obligation of a child is to have the proper and complete prayers recited for the welfare of his deceased parents' soul. Prayers do not cut the sins of the deceased. They merely help the Urvan in working towards accepting the result of what has been done on the Earth. If the upbringing of the children has been such that they have seen their own parents have the prayers said for their grandparents – only then will the children do the same for their own parents. But if it is not so, then even our own children will ignore their responsibilities, and in effect pass on this lax attitude to their children.

Thus the devotee requests for the help of the Yazata Behram in creating a progeny which will ensure that after their death, the children will take care of the welfare of their parents' souls. Just as the residents of the Aryan countries and the innumerable lords of the early ages had given birth to progenies which were much more evolved than them, so also the devotee wishes to bring into this world a child who will achieve more glory, success and spiritual advancement than themselves.

Karta 20: Behram Yazata and the Gava

61. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. Yatha Ahu Vairyo (1). Courage for the Gava (cattle), homage for the Gava, (good) word for the Gava, protection for the Gava, food for the Gava, clothing for the Gava. Let one till her (the Earth) for the Gava, (since) she (the Gava) is increasing our food.

In the preceding karta we saw the wish of the devotee to beget an offspring that would take care of the devotee's spiritual progress after death. However this wish is generally granted only to people of the Pasupach group. Why? We need to examine who exactly constitute the Pasupach and Nasupach groups. Just because a man lives a life of piety, follows the Tarikats of the religion and generally conducts himself the way a true Zarathushtrian should does not mean that he belongs to the Pasupach group. This is so because even when he does so it is generally observed that such men have to suffer a lot in their lives in material and emotional terms. They always seem to be under some or the other trouble or difficulties. In fact some people even argue that it makes more sense to live a material and unholy life since these days such people are more successful whereas those who try to speak the truth and conduct business honestly are more likely to go bankrupt. There is a reason behind this seeming anomaly or injustice.

Man is composed of physical DNA which through various permutations and combinations gives rise to the atoms that make up the different parts of the body. However, the spiritual counterpart of the physical DNA is known as Anasers. They are the divine building blocks of Nature. The anasers are composed of two basic elements – the Good Element, called *Gava*, and the Non-good element, called *Dravao*. The intermingling of *Gava* and *Dravao* in various intensities gives rise to the physical DNA which in turn forms the human body as we know it.

The Earth is constantly being bombarded with various types of radiations. The Avesta categorises these radiations into two main types – *Asere Roshni* – the good, beneficent blessings arising out of the work of Ahura Mazda and His Amesha Spentas and Yazatas; and *Asere Tariki* – the evil, malevolent radiations that descend on the Earth as an attempt of Angra Mino to disrupt the smooth progress of the creations of Ahura Mazda.

When the composition of a man's body is such that the anasers have more of *Gava* than *Dravao*, his body attracts the good waves - *Asere Roshni*. When there is a preponderance of *Dravao* over *Gava* in the body, the man attracts the bad waves. The people who belong to the Nasupach category have a greater degree of *Dravao* in their body than *Gava*. Hence even when they try to practice the rules of the religion, their body acts as a spoilsport and gives in to the temptation of doing evil. Hence despite the best wishes and efforts of the Nasupach man, his body's actions are contrary to what he wants.

To alleviate this problem, the Nasupach man needs to increase and strengthen the *Gava* element in his body. He therefore turns to the Yazata Behram for help. Hence the 20th karta detail the help that Behram Yazata gives to the Nasupach man in his quest to achieve greater *Gava* in his body. Scholars have generally and correctly translated the word *Gava* as cattle. However, *taavil* gives us the deeper meaning that *Gava* is the element of goodness. This element of giving away the best in us for another's good is the greatest in cattle – the cow gives away her most precious product – milk for others. Her body is such that if she does not give away the milk it can actually poison her. Hence cattle are also called *Gava* in Avesta.

Hence the 20th karta starts by wishing for greater *Gava*. *Gava* is always accompanied by the Yazata Ama, courage. Hence the devotee asks for even more Ama for the *Gava* within his body and the *Gava* in the entire creation. He salutes *Gava* and pays homage unto her, appreciating her great role in nature. May the *Gava* become an even more powerful *ukhda* – an instrument for furthering Ahura Mazda's creation. With the great power may the *Gava* attain victory over the forces of *Dravao* both within the body and in the entire creation. May the *Gava* get sustenance wherever she is, so that she can further her objectives. Through that nourishment may she get clothing – that is, may she help the individual in attracting, consolidating and integrating the fragments of his soul from the lower kingdom into himself. Hence we should all work for *Gava* – till the barren earth of our soul, remove the dredges and make the soil rich so that the fruits of goodness may take seed there. When we do that, then only will the component of *Gava* within our anasers increase and become even more powerful, and totally control the *Dravao* component, so that we can safely trust our body to behave the way we want it to, so that ultimately we move from the Nasupach group to the Pasupach group. These are the majestic thoughts in this karta. Let us not degrade them by applying it to mere cattle and an agrarian way of life.

Karta 21: Behram Yazata – the destroyer of all evil

62. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura, who breaks the columns (of the hostile army), who cuts the columns, who drives away the columns, who shakes the columns. These columns he breaks, these columns he cuts, these columns he drives away, these columns he shakes – the Yazata Behram, created by Ahura; (the columns) of the demons, of (wicked) men, of sorcerers and witches and of the oppressive *Kavis* and *Karapans*.

This karta depicts Behram Yazata as the destroyer of all who oppress the gava and good elements of Nature. Hence the hostile armies, which are both within our bodies and also lurking outside in various different forms will be completely routed and destroyed by Behram Yazata. This karta is a warning to all the evil throughout the world - beware the anger of Behram Yazata when he strikes at those who obstruct the path of Frashokereiti. Special reference is made here to the *Kavis* and *Karapans* –the wilfully deaf and wilfully blind, who despite knowing that they are on the wrong path chose to ignore this fact and adopt an ostrich like attitude. Soon they will feel the anger of Behram Yazata.

Karta 22: The sorry state of those who oppose Behram Yazata; their repentance and ultimate salvation

63. We attune ourselves with Behram Yazata, created by Ahura. When Yazata Behram, created by Ahura binds the hands at the back, covers up the eyes, makes the ears empty of men of drawn up columns, of (allied) countries who lie unto Mithra, (then) he (such an evil person) cannot support (himself) with his 2 legs, and he becomes (quite) powerless.

The last karta of the Behram Yasht details the sorry state of those humans who help the forces of evil, and oppose Truth and Order. When Behram Yazata strikes these unfortunate people, he completely destroys them, he takes away all they have, he causes their evil businesses to collapse, and destroys all their senses and faculties. When this happens, then the evil men realise their error and the seriousness of their sins. They realise that their evil knowledge and dirty money is of no use. Their bodies, which are overflowing with dravao develops the most dreadful diseases. Out of this pain and suffering, the evil doers will realise their wrong paths. As this realisation dawns, they will start the process of Patet – the genuine repentance of their sins, go back to following the practices and Tarikats of the religion, put on once again the long discarded Sudreh and Kusti, relearn the Avesta Manthras, and begin the process of invoking Behram Yazata. After this genuine repentance and through severe spiritual discipline, they will begin reciting the Behram Yasht, and if they do so with full faith and dedication, then after 40 days, the Yazata Behram will appear to them in one of the ten forms described in the first ten Kartas of the Yasht. Thus the whole cycle is repeated and through countless such cycles the Earth moves forward, slowly but ever so surely towards that one aim and goal – the final union with Ahura Mazda – *Frashokereiti*.

May this translation of the Behram Yasht be one insignificant, but nonetheless positive step in that glorious process.