

## **GATHA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON KNOWLEDGE IN ANCIENT IRAN AND THE WORLD**

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Stem Cell Research is the topic of the day and is a good example of what knowledge can do. Scientists hope to find the cure to many diseases that are at present without any cure. Diabetes, Alzheimer, spinal cord injuries and preventing heart failures by rejuvenating heart muscles are just to name a few. Stem cells are cells, which are like a blank piece of paper and one can draw anything on it; they have no character and can be given the character of whichever organ we need to repair. Stem cells are formed soon after the female egg and the male sperm meet and form the embryo. In a couple of days these cells start taking the character of various parts of the body. Scientists need them before this change takes place.

Today the major religions have come out against this research and want it stopped. They argue that once the male sperm and female egg combine life is formed and has to be respected because God gives life even if formed in a test tube.

Some scientists argue that daily millions of eggs and sperm are washed down the toilet drains. If some of these are put together in a test tube, as is done in the fertility clinics, and used for advancement of science and curing deadly diseases, thereby saving life and reducing suffering, where is the disrespect for life.

The funny part is that killing of human beings in the name of religion has the approval of religion and even heavens door are opened for the killer. While an embryonic cell that has not yet formed the character of any organ of the human body is a matter of contest.

There are others who argue that if some one has a fatal disease it is the will of God and what right have the scientists to interfere in Gods plan for that person.

Religion and science have never seen eye to eye as far as knowledge is concerned. Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise for having eaten from the TREE OF KNOWLEDGE. Latter from Socrates to Galileo and till today whosoever has preached the truth has paid the price.

In contrast to all these the ancient teacher and intellect Zarathushtra, professes progress and creativity. He has given guidelines to solve such complex problems with ease. What he has said in his Gathas is what the scientists and intellects of today and tomorrow and ultimately the whole world should study and follow. For in the Gathas Zarathushtra speaks to those who are in quest of knowledge.

And of these  
Shall I speak to those eager  
Those qualities of wisdom  
That all the wise wish  
And call creative qualities  
And good creation of the mind  
The all-powerful truth (Asha)  
Truly and that more & better ways  
Are discovered towards Perfection

Zarathushtra - Gatha Yasna Ha 30.1 (FR)

(Please see Foot Note on translation of the Gathas --Thanks)

Gathas the teachings of Zarathushtra, the intellect and teacher of the ancient world, whom no one has surpassed till today; is all about Knowledge and Wisdom and how we should conduct ourselves in the quest for knowledge. It defines the aim of human life and shows how the aim can be achieved. It is straightforward and involves no parables. It does not speak of the unseen and the unknown world but of Truth (reality), which is all around us on this planet earth and of the Wisdom in Creation, which is within the reach of all those who care to understand it.

In his teachings, knowledge, creativity and progress are the key words of life. He makes us aware of the weakness of the mind and advices against the use of the Evil side of the mind (Ahri Mana). Human thought has the potential of causing harm but it is the wise that avoid it by choosing the right path.

And these thoughts in the beginning  
Whose opposing nature revealed themselves  
In the mind and in the words also  
In the deeds and these were good and bad  
And of these the wise  
Rightly choose not so truly the unwise  
Zarathushtra - Yasna - Gatha Ha 30.03 (FR)

A community, a city, a nation, which is on the right path makes the right choice and thereby brings about progress. While those evil thinkers bring about destruction. It is a fact of life and Zarathushtra wants everyone to understand and recognizes it.

And also when these together thoughts  
Did come, it first of all created  
Life and not life and  
Thus will be the result,  
Creation of evil by speakers of untruth  
And by the followers of truth the best thoughts

Zarathushtra - Yasna - Gatha Ha 30.04 (FR)

## THE SOLUTION?

Zarathushtra talks of a time tested solution. **He says it is only by giving information, educating and increasing knowledge that you can change the mind of Evil thinkers.** He assures that with increase in good knowledge and progress even such a person will be able to achieve righteousness without fail.

This message and good guidance shall bring  
On the mind good knowledge and  
And such person will progress  
Will achieve righteousness without fail  
Those you near to them shall be thus  
Has been tested successfully before

Zarathushtra - Yasna - Gatha Ha 30.07 (FR)

## THE TEST OF TIME

In history we see this very verse being put to use by the Hakhamaneshinian Dynasty (HD) 2500 years ago, with success. Kurosh the Great liberates Babylon whose people were being forced to contribute by way of heavy tax, towards the building of a new Temple for

the gods. But he does not force upon them his beliefs; instead he bows and pays respect to Mardukh the patron god of the Babylonians.

A generation latter Herodotus travels through Babylonian and writes.

"The erection of statues, temples, and alters is not an accepted practice among them, and anyone who does such a thing is considered a fool, because, presumably, the Persian religion is not anthropomorphic like the Greeks. .... "

He further say ----- "they erect no altar and kindle no fire; libation, the flute music, the garlands, the sprinkled meal - all these things, familiar to us, they have no use for. "

He adds, .... "The actual worshiper is not permitted to pray for any personal or private blessing, but only for the king and the general good of the community, of which he is himself a part. "

Here we clearly see that only by imparting knowledge the Zarathushties had changed the ways of the Babylonians.

So also was the case of the Jews who had been granted permission to go back to Jerusalem and rebuilt their temple and were even given financial support. They too seem to have had a change in their beliefs. For we see that they don't agree to rebuild the temple in the ancestral way with the Jews back home.

' Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the father, and said unto them, Let us built with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. ' (Bible-Ezra 4:2)

' But Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to built an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will built unto the LORD GOD of Israel, as KING CYRUS THE KING OF PERSIA HATH COMMANDED US.' (Ezra 4:3)

This message and good guidance shall bring, On the mind good  
knowledge and, And such person will progress .....  
seems to have worked.

Next lets move to Egypt where they believed in life after death and spend all their resources building Pyramids. Daryush the great diverted those resources to build the Daryush Canal by connecting the Red Sea to the Mediterranean through the Nile. Whereby increasing trade and bringing prosperity to the people of Egypt.

And now that brought upon them  
To change collectively their mistakes  
Now wisdom brings upon them good rule  
Good use of the mind shall show  
Them learn of creation  
So that by giving knowledge conquers the false one

Zarathushtra - Yasna - Gatha Ha 30.08 (FR)

Wherever the Iranians went they brought about progress and change for the good of mankind. Whatever they did was for the benefit of all mankind and not for personal gains. As Herodotus has said; "The actual worshiper is not permitted to pray for any personal or private blessing, but only for the king and the general good of the community, of which he is himself a part. " Thus we see that for a temple the Hakhamaneshinian Zarathushties did not improve on the Tower of Babel but they built the Daryush Canal, they introduced irrigation systems, they surveyed the sea route from Indus to the Nile, they built a land route from Shush to Sardis and also introduced the postal system, all of which were of a high standard, most of them we still aspire to equal.

They left behind their mark on Agriculture, Trade and Commerce, Justice and Peace and above all on Knowledge and Religion.

In Avesta it still says ' Tani O Ravani ', Body and Soul; the Body precedes the Soul. Thus they improved the living conditions wherever they went, the same philosophy did not allow selfishness but preached coexistence, so as an Empire they aimed at improving the life of all human beings.

The soul would take care of itself if the body were taken care of, so the Zarathushties paid special attention to agriculture. They are known to have introduced rice into Mesopotamia, pistachio nuts into Syria and sesame into Egypt. They introduced the science of manufacturing linen from flax, which was otherwise used to abstract oil only. They introduced fruits and vegetables throughout the Empire, wherever the right

environment existed for their growth but were unknown to the local population. The Alfalfa, which was good forage for animals, was introduced in the Mediterranean region from Media.

Improving agriculture in far away Egypt was not to have more food for themselves but to benefit the Egyptians. They introduced the Indian wild hen and cock to the Mediterranean to become our domestic fowl.

The introduction of the Kariz (Qhanat), a system of irrigation where water from the springs was led through underground canals to far flung land which had better soil and environment for agriculture but lacked water.

The Kariz (Qhanat) was used by the Zarathushties on the Iranian plateau where the area surrounding the source of the spring was usually not advantageous for agriculture. If the water were to be led by means of overland canals, most of the water would be lost to evaporation. The scarcity of water encouraged the Zarathushties to devise a means of obtaining both the objectives; minimum evaporation and having the water at the right spot. Underground canals were therefore dug for miles at a stretch and the water was led to the desired destination.

The digging of underground canals was a great feat of engineering. It required perfect knowledge of geometry, mathematics and geology to get to the right depth and give it the correct angle so that the water flowed calmly and immersed at the right spot with the minimum erosion of the tunnel walls. Pythagoras, who is also said to have drawn two columns under the heading of Good things and Bad things, learned his geometry from the Iranians. He put into words, as a theorem, what was common working knowledge among the Iranians.

The Kariz sometimes had to cover a distance of over 60 miles, especially in the desert. Today we know the knowledge required in digging an underground tunnel and can appreciate better the high standard of knowledge and technology among the Iranians more than 2500 years ago. This system was later introduced throughout the Empire, from India to Egypt, and is still in use in the deserts of Yazd and Kerman in Iran.

With such knowledge they created Paradise, the garden of fruits and flowers, a symbol of alliance between man and nature, the reward of hard work and sensibility. They called it Ferdows and the Greeks called it Paridiza; pairi meaning 'round' and diz meaning 'enclosure', which has

become Paradise in English. It was introduced for the first time by Xenophon in his ' Oeconomicus ', where he relates how Kurosh son of Ardeshir personally conducted Lysander round his Paradise at Sardis.

A more important fact lies in this report of Xenophon, which throws light on the advanced knowledge of the Iranians. He reports that; '... Lysander was full of admiration for the beauty of the trees, the accuracy of their spacing, the straightness of their rows, and the regularity of the angles and the multitude of sweet scents. ... '

This is exactly what we would today expect a scientifically planted garden to look like. And scientific knowledge the Zarathushties had in abundance. What scientist in Japan and the former USSR learned in the 1960's, the Avesta had it for centuries in the 'Mah Yasht'.

" And when the light of the moon waxes warmer, golden-hued plants grow on from the earth during the spring"

Today scientist know that seeds sown in spring starting with the waxing of the moon grows faster and healthier than those sowed with the waning of the moon or somewhere in between.

With the help of Kariz they made the desert bloom but Babylon had a different problem. The Flood. The problem was so great that it inspired Epics like Gilgamesh and its Biblical version of the Noah's Ark.

The Zarathushties introduced an irrigation system of canals crisscrossing the Land Between The Two Rivers, Tigris and Euphrates. A system of dams controlled the flow of water and Assyria and Babylon became the grain house of the Empire. The system of irrigation was so successful that Herodotus in 450 BC describes the area as the richest grain bearing country in the world. He says:

'The blades of wheat and barley are at least three inches wide. As for the millet and sesame, I will not say what astonishing size they grow, though I know well enough; but I also know that people who have not been to Babylon have refused to believe even what I have said already about its fertility.'

It was not fertility and irrigation alone that gave crops as described by Herodotus, the Iranians also put to use their (Asha Vahista) knowledge of scientific farming.

Thus the Flood became a thing of the past and the prosperity even inspired the writers of Genesis, for it says:

8:21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I WILL NOT AGAIN CURSE THE GROUND ANY MORE FOR MAN'S SAKE... '

But this promise did not last forever, according to the historian Baladhuri in 629 AD during the reign of Khosrow Parviz, one of the last Zarathushti Emperors, the Dajlah and Foraht (Euphrates and Tigris) rose and there was a flood as had never before been seen. Both rivers burst their dykes in innumerable places and finally laid all the surrounding country under water. Khosrow Parviz himself superintended the re-setting of the dykes, sparing neither treasure nor men's lives, but was unable to master the flood. The water could not be got back, and the swamps thus formed became permanent.

Today the Marsh Land of Babylon in Iraq is well known, with the people once again living on the water and their main crop is dates. The grain house of the Zarathushties is today a wasteland in Iraq.

In order that all people benefit from the good things in life, the Iranians encouraged trade and commerce. The maintenance of a common standardized coinage called 'Zarik' (Zar = gold) throughout the Empire, and the introduction of standard weights and measures made trade and commerce easy and helped it flourish.

Justice is very important for the society to flourish, and the Persian justice was famous, throughout the Empire the Judges were Zarathushties and the Bible is often quoted to confirm the consistency of the law.

'... according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which altereth not.' (Daniel 6:8)

Knowledge, Progress and Change for the good of mankind is what we see in those two and half centuries of true Zarathushti rule. Although in



this period there also were a couple of bad rulers and bad subjects but it is the majority that counts.

## **SPREADING OF KNOWLEDGE**

Knowledge when you gain  
With minds good use  
Having realized wisdom  
The path to righteousness  
The ultimate message of Wisdom  
Through words excellent  
We shall turn (convert)  
Those who do not know  
By speaking  
Zarathushtra - Yasna - Gatha Ha 28.05 (FR)

2500 years ago the two Super Powers were Persian on one side and Greek and Rome on the other. Their philosophy of life differed; Greek and Rome had many gods who played chess in the heavens with human pawns. Knowledge was confined to the temples and within the realm of gods. Instead of using the mind they would seek the solution to their problems by sacrificing to the gods. The Oracle of Delphi in Athens was a rich goddess, who never made mistakes in predicting events because the failure of its prediction were attributed to the wrong interpretation of its advice by humans. We see this throughout the reports of Herodotus and Xenophon.

The Persians had to spread their knowledge to get rid of such crude philosophy. We see this happening when the Greeks come in contact with the Persians. Initially it met with resistance and Socrates was put to death. But the age of learning and scholarly works started in earnest among the Greeks after the Peace treaty of 449 BCE by Ardeshir II and is a proof of Zarathushti influence. The most famous philosophers, historians, poets and men of learning all thrived after this date. Plato (born 428 BC), Antisthenes (born 446 BC), Euclides (born 435 BC), and Xenophon became students of Socrates.

Horace, Velleius Paterculus, Stratagems, Tactus, Plutarch, Dio Cassius, Appain, Arrian, Herodian, Fronto, Lucian are some of the Greeks who took the opportunity to learn from the Zarathushties what ever they could and put it down in writing in their own version. Today the World quotes

from the work of these men of learning and call it Greek philosophy, mathematic, medicine, etc. forgetting the origin and source of these knowledge.

**The very fact that the Iranians as super powers brought about so much positive change and progress compared to the Greek of the same period who put Socrates to death speaks volumes and when we read the Gathas we realize the source of their outlook to life.**

This very source, the Gathas of Zarathushtra, is what the intellectuals of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century who seeks knowledge and progress need to study and follow, to avoid repeating past mistakes. So that when they discover the atom they do not invent the bomb, when they learn to fly they do not use that power to drops bombs. When they study stem cells they do that what is best for mankind.

That these laws you understand  
That wisdom has given humans  
Happiness and pain  
That and practice of evil harms  
Progress and followers of truth  
And as a result of these shall come illumination  
Zarathushtra - Yasna - Gatha Ha 30.11 (FR)

Two thousand five hundred years ago the Gathas, in spite of great odds, and in spite of it being attacked to near oblivion, sowed the seed of progress and was instrumental in bringing about positive progress in the world. Today we need to recognize that and once again study and follow the Gathas with an open mind for today the world needs to understand and follow the real meaning of the Gathas as never before.

Listen with your ears to the supreme facts  
Consider with open mind  
Between the paths before deciding  
Person by person for his own self  
Before greatness of this message  
Is truly spread understand each one  
Zarathushtra - Yasna - Gatha Ha 30.02 (FR)

NOTE:

The above translation of the Gathas is a word by word translation as such the English sentences may not be grammatically correct and may require that it be read a couple of times to understand its full meaning. This method has been preferred to avoid the translator's philosophy entering the Gatha in the name of grammar, rhyme and rhythm.

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