

SAOSHYANT

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Savior

Most religions speak of a person who would come and right the wrong, that he would clean the world of all its irregularities and turn it into an ideal perfect place to live. Believing this, many people are awaiting the coming of such a person and some of them are simply doing nothing constructive because they hold that nothing can be accomplished without him. Further, they believe that things would grow from bad, to worse, to worst until he comes and provides the panacea. This person, divine, semi-divine or human being and definitely male, is now generally called “Savior”.

Alphabetically, *Baha'is* have their long-awaited Saviors already manifested in *Bab* (declaration in 1844 CE) and *Baha'u'llah* (1867 CE). Buddhists expect periodical comings of *Bodhisattva-s*, particularly the “friendly” *Maitreya/Metteya*. Christians have been awaiting the return of Christ for the last 2,000 years. Hindus believe that *Avatâr* (literary ‘descent’), the incarnation of a deity, particularly Shiva, in human or animal form, descends on certain times to counteract evil dominance in the world. Jews began anticipating the “Messiah” before even the Christians. Many Muslims, particularly the “Twelver” Shias, are desperately waiting for the *Mahdi*, ‘the Rightly Guided’, to appear for over the last 1,000 years. Finally, while the “Reformist” Zoroastrians, awaiting no miracles, appreciate the selfless services rendered by the beneficent persons to the community, the “Traditionalist” Zoroastrians, who have been waiting for more than 3,000 years, are well prepared to receive *Shah Bahram Varjâvand* and the three consecutive *Saoshyants* to return the Traditionalists to their previously enjoyed top position in the world. Some believe that Varjâvand has already been born in India, and all he has to do is to come out in public and set the world right.

The waiting has been so intense in these centuries and millennia that many such people in every creed believe that the time of arrival is at hand and the appearance imminent. However, much time has passed, and the result is that no savior has appeared. Even if someone has claimed to be the awaited savior, he has been rejected by the majority and sometimes cruelly killed. Some Buddhists believe the Dalai Lama to be just an embodiment of a *Buddhisatva*, while others believe *Buddhisatva-s* to be in the future. Hindus remain content with the scheduled appearances. The Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah. The Christians do not accept Mohammed as the promised Prophet. Muslims repudiate Bab and Baha'u'llah as the Mahdi-s. And Zoroastrians have seen the three millenniums, each fixed for the three *Saoshyants*, pass well beyond their established dates without any miraculous appearance. As such, the waiting still continues, same as it has always been for all of the awaiting believers.

What is the reason for this waiting of a coming savior? To the immediate followers of a founder of a religion, the belief was that the world would be made perfect within the founder's lifetime or at least immediately after his departure. But events have proven otherwise. Events continued as the situation demanded. Disappointments followed. The only way out was to say that there would come a redeemer who would improve the situation. The hope has helped them

to continue to wait and wait and not give up “faith” in desperation. And as the wait has rolled from age to age, it has gathered mass. The mass has created the conditions, conditions that make it harder and harder for any person to claim the position. The coming is to be preceded by miracles that would foretell the coming. Signs, such as famine, floods, earthquakes and other disasters sent by a “vindictive/punitive God” or a “mischievous and merciless” Devil, striking harder and harder. Since all these disasters and the designated signs and miracles have not yet had the exact fit as laid down, the waiting for a “Savior” continues unabated.

Zoroastrianism is the earliest of the awaiting religions expecting a redeemer. The word is “Saoshyant”, freely translated as the “Savior”. A survey of the Avesta shows that the term was coined by no person other than Zarathushtra Spitâma, the very Founder of the Doctrine. He mentions it six times in his Sublime Songs, the Gathas, enough to define the term. The Later Avesta has mentioned it 28 times and that affords a glimpse of its early evolution. The Pahlavi writings promise the long awaited and belated three Saoshyants and describe the signs that would precede the appearance of each of them. The relevant Persian books add a fourth person, Shah Bahram Varjâvand, King Bahram the Illustrious, to herald the three. That makes the Traditionalists look for four redeemers, especially Varjâvand.

SAOSHYANT

Saoshyant, derived in Avesta from su- ‘to benefit’, means literally ‘benefactor’. Although Pahlavi has its “Soshyans” for the eagerly awaited savior, it translates the Gathic and Later Avestan *saoshyant* simply as *sûd(o)mand* ‘benefactor’ in singular and plural as the case stands. It is the same *sûdmand* in the Persian translation of the Pahlavi text. The rendering by Dastur Neryosang Dhaval (1166 CE) in Sanskrit is *lâbhamant* ‘gainful, profitable’.

Saoshyant in the Gathas:

God, this is the same road of good mind
You have shown me.
It is the religion of the BENEFACTORS
by which good deeds lead only through righteousness to happiness,
the promised reward for the beneficent,
a reward, Wise One, solely given by You.
(Song 7.13 = Yasna 34.13)

He who denies the false gods and their men,
just as they deny him, and unlike others,
acknowledges Him in good spirit, is,
through his progressive conscience, the BENEFACTOR and master of house,
rather a friend, brother, and father, O Wise God.
(10.11 = 45.11)

When, Wise One, shall those days dawn which will,
for the maintenance of the righteous world,
motivate the wisdom of the BENEFACTORS with advanced teachings.

To whom shall this wisdom come with good mind to help?
For myself, Lord, I choose Your teachings.
(11.3 = 46:3)

When shall I know, Wise One, that You have power
through righteousness over anyone whose threats are harmful to me?
Let the plan of good mind be truly told to me
so that the BENEFACTOR knows how his reward shall be.
(13.9 = 48.9)

Now, they shall be the BENEFACTORS of the lands
who follow the satisfaction of good mind,
and base their actions through righteousness on Your teachings, Wise One.
They indeed have been made to fight fury.
(13.12 = 48.12)

And now, let Kavi Vishtaspa, the Zarathushtrian Spitama,
and Ferashaoshtra pursue,
with mind, words, and deeds, the knowledge for the praise
and for the choice of veneration of the Wise One,
in order to establish in straight paths
the religion which God has granted to the BENEFACTOR.
(17.2 = 53.2)

The above six stanzas stand apart. Each is a part of a song. To understand them as best as we can do, is to read each, then look at the context within the relevant song, and finally within the Gathic Doctrine.

Instance One is the 13th of 15 stanzas in Song 7, the Song of Renovation. Zarathushtra asks for Divine Enlightenment for the new community to thwart his antagonists who are up against him in order to safeguard their vested interests. He stands firm on his principles to continue the mission of defeating the inimical designs, spreading the Message, rehabilitating the people who have lost their rights, and renovating the world to maintain it as fresh as God wishes. This is the path a BENEFACTOR treads.

Instance Two is the 11th and the last stanza of Song 10 of “Proclamation”. Zarathushtra makes the proclamation in an assembly of people from far and near. He cautions them of the persons attempting to dissuade them back into the old cult. He makes it clear that the two mentalities, the progressive and the regressive, have nothing in common. The choice of one means the abandoning of the other. One helps progression and the other causes regression. He prays to God for strength and endurance to spread the Message. And he finishes his proclamation by stating that those who deny false gods and their followers by actively serving the progressive movement are truly the BENEFACTORS and supporters of society.

Instance Three is the 3rd of 19 stanzas of Song 11, the Song which presents two parts of Zarathushtra's life: (a) the early missionary days when he suffered persecution at the hand of

parrot priest Karapans and their allies, the poet prince Kavis, and (b) the days when he had won over the persons—the Turanian tribe of Fryanas and later King Vishtaspa and Sages Frashaoshtra and Jamaspa who spread his message far and wide. People had now gathered around their BENEFACTOR to zealously work to start a completely fresh life in a fruitful world with a bright future.

Instance Four is the 9th of 12 stanzas of Song 13, the Song of Victory over Wrong. Wrong results in wrong ways, and good produces yet more goodness. Wrong must be conquered. This is achieved by means of righteousness, good mind, and profound wisdom, a wisdom that promotes one to become godlike. Fury and violence, practiced by fanatic religious leaders and wicked social rulers who indulge in intoxicating rituals, must be abandoned. Spreading health and happiness is a foremost principle of life. Government must be run only by the truly elected good, wise, and righteous persons. Life on the earth must be led in peace, prosperity, and progress. It is only then that true reward of good life is obtained. It is only then that the divine dominion is established. It is only then that the mission of the BENEFACTOR is rewarded.

Instance Five is the last stanza of the same Song 13. The BENEFACTORS of their lands are those who follow good mind in thinking and righteousness in action. Based on the Divine Doctrine, they stand firmly opposed to violence.

Instance Six is the second of 9 stanzas of the last song, the Song of the Best Wish, Song 17. A successful Zarathushtra feels that his wishes of spreading the divine message to the entire humanity have come true. He finds that his early enemies have learned about the beauties of Good Conscience and have accepted its principles. He appreciates the services being rendered by his companions and as he prepares to retire, he urges them to continue their good work. The Doctrine of the BENEFACTOR is in full progress.

From the above six instances we know that a Benefactor is a person who uses his good mind and precise actions to renovate the world of human beings by standing firm in one's conviction, meeting opposition, repairing wrong, restoring right, promoting society, and updating life in a free world of radiating happiness. It is a selfless resolute task of adoration of God, love for humanity and devotion to duty. He/she is the person who leads in the sublime service. Zarathushtra is the Foremost Benefactor. Others are those who follow the Primal Principles of Life, defined in the Sublime Songs.

Saoshyant in the Later Avesta:

Although the present order of the extant Avesta is not based on chronology to help us have a full view of the evolution of the idea, we better follow it for data reasons. It will give us a fair vision to make a good conclusion.

- (1) Haoma, the “Ritualistic Drink” animatedly tells Zarathushtra: “Pray to me, O Spitama, prepare me for the drink. Praise me so that other BENEFACTORS also praise me.” (Yasna: 9:2).

The scene: Zarathushtra has already delivered the Divine Doctrine and composed his Gathas. He is facing the Fire-altar and singing his Sublime Songs on a fine morning. He has his full knowledge of the old cult and has condemned its superfluous rituals. Yet strangely enough, he has no knowledge of the age-old, well-known Haoma ritual. That is why “Haoma” has appeared in form of a highly handsome youth, explains to him the progeny potency of the drink and wants him to reintroduce the ritual and pave the way for its continuation in the future.

- (2) This is a part of the details of the Initiation Ceremony (Navjote/Sadreh-pûshi). It may be noted that this is the only piece in the Gathic dialect (Yasna 12.1–14.2) that mentions “Benefactors” in the Later Avesta collection. It is, therefore, within the Gathic period. The Initiate declares: I uphold Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds and discard bad thoughts, words and deeds. I choose progressive serenity and believe in freedom of movements. I condemn disorder and renounce false gods and their devotees, and sorcerers and their devotees. In fact, I renounce “every mental malady and physical ailment” “just as Asho Zarathushtra did” and then adds: “With *varana* ‘choice belief’ in waters, plants, the bountiful world; with ‘choice belief’ in the Wise Lord who created the living world and the righteous man—the ‘choice belief’ that Zarathushtra, King Vishtaspa, Ferashaoshtra and Jamaspa had, and the ‘choice belief’ any of the truth-practicing righteous BENEFACTORS have, it is with the same belief and doctrine that I am a worshiper of the Wise One. I, with my appreciations and choice beliefs, choose for myself to be a worshiper of the Wise One and Zoroastrian” (Yasna 12:7) Note: The Gathic *varana* means the belief one ‘chooses’ and forms after a thorough study and consideration. It is the “Choice Belief.” The word does not occur in the Later Avestan dialect with the exception as a compound, *anyo-varena* (‘Belonging to Other Belief’), mentioned twice in the Vendidad (12.21; 19.2).
- (3) Here a person, evidently the Initiated, acknowledges the priest with the greatest knowledge of the Good Religion as the ‘Ratu’ (the Right Guide), teachers amongst them as Ratus, and those immortal progressives and BENEFACTORS, who are the wisest, most right-speaking, most helping, most stimulating and the most courageous as the Ratus of the Good Religion amongst the priests, warriors, and progressive settlers. (Yasna 13:3 [continuation of the Initiation Ceremony]). Profound knowledge is the criterion for a leading position.
- (4) “Here are veneration and praise for your immortal progressives! Here are prosperity, popularity, righteousness, victory and soulfulness for our BENEFACTORS.” (Yasna 14:1).
- (5) This chapter is a commentary on Ashem Vohu. It says that the best righteousness is for the righteous persons, including “the BENEFACTORS.” (Yasna 20.3)
- (6) “Hereby, we announce our veneration, glorification, pleasure and ... for the Fravashi of Zarathushtra Spitâma and the Fravashis of all the rightful, those who have passed away, those who are living and the persons not yet born, the BENEFACTORS.” (Yasna 24:5)

- (7) “We venerate the Fravashis of all the righteous, from Gaya Maretan (earliest leader) to the victorious BENEFACTOR (the last leader).” (Yasna 26:10)
- (8) A long list of persons, from Ahura Mazda and yazatas to the Fravashis of men and women, including the Fravashis of the praying person and “the victorious BENEFACTOR” are venerated. (Yasna 59:28)
- (9) “How should we drive away druj (‘wrong’) from ourselves? We should, as BENEFACTORS, drive wrong from ourselves, just as the powerful drives away the powerless.” (Yasna 61:5)
- (10) While wishing to inform all of the Zoroastrian Religion, the praying persons say: “So that we attain the wish of the word, so that the BENEFACTORS of countries bear the useful word: May we be the BENEFACTORS, may we be the victorious, may we be the friends of Ahura Mazda, we the righteous and the most helpful companions, who are the righteous persons practicing good thoughts, good words and good deeds.” (Yasna 70:4).
- (11) “... I wish to venerate the person who performs the rituals, the person who maintains well-thoughts thoughts, well-spoken words and well-done deeds, who holds progressive serenity and the thought-provoking [Message] of the BENEFACTORS through the actions with which the living worlds are promoted by righteousness.” (Vispered: 2:5).
- (12) “We declare each one of you Mazda-worshippers as Ratu and we appoint the immortal progressives and BENEFACTORS who are the wisest, most right-speaking, most helping, most stimulating and the most courageous as Ratus.” (Vispered 3:5).
- (13) “Here are veneration and praise for your immortal progressives! Here are prosperity, popularity, righteousness, victory and soulfulness for our BENEFACTORS.” (Vispered 5:1[same as Yasna 14.1]).
- (14) While offering Haoma juice and other libations to various entities, “the innate minds of the righteous and innate minds of the BENEFACTORS” are mentioned. (Vispered 11:3)
- (15) Haoma and other libations are offered "for the promotion of this house, for the gain of this house, for the progress of this house, for freedom-from-malice for this house, for cattle and righteous persons who have been born and who will be born, those who belonged to this, those who belong to this, we who belong to this (house), and the BENEFACTORS of the countries. (Vispered 11:13).
- (16) “.... [We venerate] the companions of all yazatas, companions of the thought-provoking Message, the companions of anti-false-gods law, companions of long-traditions, companions of immortal progressives, companions of us BENEFACTORS ...” (Yasht: 11:17)
- (17) “The Fravashis of the Pioneers in the Doctrine and the not-born renovating BENEFACTORS are the most powerful.” (Yasht 13:17)

- (18) Speaking of a post-Gathic battle between the defending Zarathushtrians and the aggressor Dânuš, “it was your [Fravashis’] help that made the Karshnazas, the brave Khshtawis, the brave BENEFACTORS, and the brave victorious into most beneficent heroes [in defeating the Dânuš].” (Yasht 13:38).
- (19) “We venerate the Religion of the BENEFACTORS.” (Yasht 13:74).
- (20) “We venerate the Fravashi of Righteous Ukhshyat-ereta, the Fravashi of the Righteous Ukhshyat-nemah, and the Fravashi of the Righteous Astvat-ereta, who would be called the victorious BENEFACTOR, who would be called the Astvat-ereta. He would be called BENEFACTOR because he would benefit the entire physical existence. He would be called Astvat-ereta because he would render body and life imperishable.” (Yasht 13:128-129).
- (21) “... We venerate the Fravashi of the virgin Eredat-Fedhri, who is known as Vîspa-Taurvairi. She is Vîspa-Taurvairi because she will give birth to him who would break down the malice of the false gods and men in order to withstand the evil done by the Jahi (the Embodiment of Female Prostitution).” (Yasht 13:142).
- (22) “We venerate Ashi Vanguhi ... who augments the BENEFACTORS with fresh intellect.” (Yasht 17:2).
- (23) “Ahura Mazda created the creatures so that they make life fresh, never growing old, never dying, never decaying, never rotting, ever living, ever growing, master of wish, when the dead will arise, when life will become immortal and life will be made fresh according to the wish. Following righteousness, the world will become immortal. Wrong will go to where it came to harm the righteous, The destroyer would perish. The imposter would be driven away.” (Yasht 19:11–12).
- (24) “The Kayanian Glory belongs to the mental and physical yazatas and to the born and unborn renovating BENEFACTORS.” (Yasht 19:22)
- (25) “The Kayanian Glory will belong to the victorious BENEFACTOR as well as his companions so that he makes life fresh, which never grows old, never dies, never decays, never rots. It is ever-living, ever-growing, master of its will, ... a world created by Ahura Mazda and filled with goodness, filled with beauty, filled with freshness, filled with light.” (Zamyad Yasht 89-90).
- (26) “At that time when Astvat-ereta, messenger of Ahura Mazda and son of Vîspa-Taurvairi, would rise from Lake Kânsvi” (Yasht 19:92)
- (27) “And his friends, the friends of Astvat-ereta will come forward, the friends who are victorious, good-thinking, good-speaking, good-doing, and good-conscience and whose tongues have never uttered a false word.” (Yasht 19:95).

- (28) “From whom come the knowledge of righteousness and the increase in righteousness of the Holy Principle and without whom no BENEFACTOR can know righteousness.” (Vyt:15).
- (29) “... May the victorious BENEFACTOR show ...” (the sentence is not clear in meaning). (Vyt:30).
- (30) In his encounter with Anghra Mainyu, Zarathushtra tells him: “O evil-doer, Anghra Mainyu! I will smite the creation of the Daeva, I will smite the Nasu, a creation of the Daeva; I will smite the Pairika Knâñthaiti, till the victorious BENEFACTOR comes to life out of Lake Kânsvi, from the region of the dawn, from the regions of the dawn.” (Vendidat: 19:5)
- (31) “Â Airyêmâ Ishyô (Yasna 54:1) [is] the greatest of all words, ... the most triumphant, the word the BENEFACTORS will pronounce.” (Westergaard's Fragment 4.1)
- (32) “Let our reverential offerings be clearly manifested amongst us, the manifestations which are offerings for the immortal progressive and the BENEFACTORS ...” (Purshishniha 35)

The overall picture of the BENEFACTOR one gets out of 28 times it has been mentioned is that:

Zarathushtra is the First and Foremost among BENEFACTORS. A Benefactor is the wisest, most truthful, most helping, most stimulating, most courageous, victorious, and, above all, renovator. He fights evil. He expels wrong. The faithful pray to become Benefactors. Countries have their Benefactors. The Zarathushtrian Religion had its Benefactors in the past, has them at present and will have them in the future.

The above is in line with the Gathic conception of persons who lead in renovating the world and help in keeping it abreast of time, but we have three more points to add:

- (a) The Zamyad Yasht (Yasht 19) is mainly devoted to the “Divine Kayanian Glory” and gives a list of the pre-Zarathushtrian and pre-Kayanian kings and heroes as well as Zarathushtra and his close companions who enjoyed the blessing and protection of the Glory. It states that all Benefactors, born or unborn, have the [Royal] Kayanian Glory.
- (b) The ending chapters of the Farvardin Yasht, the accumulated list of the pioneering promoter of the Good Religion, and the above two instances of the Zamyad Yasht (paragraphs 92 and 95) confine the “saoshyant-ship” to one person. He bears two titles: Saoshyant ‘Benefactor and Astvat-ereta ‘Body-erect’, because he would benefit the entire world and make the physical body immortal, free from disease, death and decay.¹ This person will be the Messenger of Ahura Mazda. His mother is mentioned when she was still unmarried and the passage gives the reasons for her two titles—Eredat-Fedri (Exalted-Parentage) and Vîspa-Taurvairi (All-Breaking) because she would give birth to a person who would destroy the old cult. Whom she would marry or how she would get

¹ Astvat-ereta means ‘Asha given body/incarnate’. – CG

pregnant is not given. The Zamyad Yasht says that Astvat-ereta would rise from Lake Kâsvi and the Vendidad locates the lake in the region of dawn, eastern part of the land. It is Hâmûn-e Sâberi in Zabol, Sistan , Iran , close to the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan .

- (c) The other two Ukhshyat-ereta and Ukhshyat-nemah (Yasht 13:128) and the two maidens Srûtat-Fedri and Vanghu-Fedri (Yasht 13:141–42) have been mentioned in the Farvardin Yasht to have their Fravashis venerated. Nothing more. The names simply precede those of Astvat-ereta and Eredat-Fedri. Similar instances in the same Yasht show that rhyming names are borne by brothers and sisters, a tradition still observed in the world. What has made these four names linked to Astvat-ereta and his mother Eredat-Fedri is not clear. Was it the rhyming names and/or the order of the names?

The entire story of the three Saviors, as given in the Pahlavi scriptures, is woven around the passages quoted from the Farvardin and Zamyad Yashts and the only mention of Astvat-ereta in the Vendidad. All the three scriptures are accumulative compositions with later additions.

Saoshyant in Pahlavi Scriptures:

I would prefer to present the Pahlavi version as given by my Mentor Dasturji Dr. Maneckji N. Dhalla, in his outstanding “History of Zoroastrianism”, New York, 1938, pages 423–427:

THE RENOVATION

Those who further the work of the final restoration: The work of regenerating the world, which was commenced by Gayomard, the first man, and was looked forward to from the time of the Gathas, will be brought to completion and perfection by Soshyos, the last saviour. With Gayomard the curtain rose on the human drama. It will fall with the advent of Soshyos. Gayomard, Jamshid, Zaratusht, and all pious men who have worked for the betterment of the universe are among those that help in bringing about the final renovation. The great work proceeds with greater or lesser success according as mankind are stronger or weaker in the practice of righteousness at various periods. In two of his visions the prophet sees a tree with four and seven branches respectively. The branches are made of different metals and represent the various periods of the religious history of Zoroastrianism, The first and the golden branch represents the golden age of the faith under King Gushtasp [Vishtaspa], the silver and steel boughs symbolize a decadence, while the last, depicted by the iron branch, or age of the great catastrophe, is the period of the final overthrow of the empire, the overwhelming cataclysm that threatened to submerge the world except for the triumph of virtue and right. When the mighty work of reclaiming mankind from evil is accomplished, there will follow the Renovation of the universe.[i] Those who work to bring this period nearer are said to be holding communion with Ormazd.

Saviours born immaculately: Ormazd sends his special messengers at various periods of chaos and confusion to save humanity from the clutches of Ahriman. This is clear in the Gathas as in the Younger Avesta. These Messianic heralds of the real truth to be

embodied in the final Soshyos exemplify righteousness, complete and translate the abstract teachings of religion into concrete actions that thus make the seemingly incomprehensible intelligible and tangible to the masses, The most prominent among these leaders in the last three millenniums, as noted before, are the three sons that are to be born miraculously to Zaratusht from his seed through a supernatural conception by a maid, bathing in the waters of Lake Kans (an idea as old as Yasht 19), and the names of these three ideal promoters of mankind, as perpetuated in the forms current during the Pahlavi period, are Hoshedar, Hoshedar-mah, and Soshyos, who will appear at an interval of a millennium each. It is said that Zaratusht went three times near unto his wife Hvov, and that each time the seed went to the ground. On each of these three occasions, important for mankind, the spiritual seeds were caught up by the angel Neryosangh and intrusted to the keeping of Ardivisur, the divinity of waters, and from these sanctified waters they will be born in time to come, as miraculously conceived at different periods by three virgins. The advent of the all-beneficent renovators of the faith for the regeneration of the world will, as we shall see below, be attended with portents and miraculous signs.

The millennium of Hoshedar: A child is born to a virgin named Shemik-abu of the age of fifteen, who miraculously conceives Zaratusht's seed when she drinks the waters from a pool. The seed was emitted during the lifetime of Zaratusht and lay concealed in the waters until the maiden kindled the germs and became pregnant. The child thus immaculately born in the first of the three final millenniums of the world is named Hoshedar, a later modified corrupt transcript of the Avestan Ukhshyatereta. In the first of the last three thousand years of the world, before the final renovation and the resurrection, he holds, at the age of thirty, a conference with Ormazd and receives a revelation. When he returns from this divine conference, Hoshedar makes the sun stand still for ten days and nights to convince the people of the world about the authenticity of his mission. During his millennium, righteousness, liberality, and all the virtues supreme will be practised by mankind more and more as the world slowly moves towards perfection during this aeon. Two thirds of the people of Iran , according to the Pahlavi texts, will turn out righteous. The wisdom of the religion will constantly increase, the poverty of the people and the slaughter of cattle will decrease, as he is the benefactor that will help to remove the wickedness of the wolfish nature in mankind.

The millennium of Hoshedar-mah: A maiden named Shapir-abu is destined to approach the waters and conceive thereby, again through the second seed of Zaratusht. The virgin who has never approached man gives birth to a child who is named Hoshedar-mah, an imperfect rendering of the Avestan Ukhshyat-nemangh, who confers with Ormazd. At the age of thirty years he announces his advent by making the sun to stand still for twenty days and twenty nights. His benign presence and Messianic power, it is destined, will destroy the wicked product of every serpentine and monster engendure. Mankind greatly advances toward the realization of the final goal of perfection during this millennium. Cattle give milk in great quantities. In connection with this millennial view, it may be added, from the Pahlavi texts of this later period, that the small cattle which give milk will give milk then in redoubled quantity, and a cow will give as much milk as could be used by a thousand men. Hunger and thirst decrease, as the world reaches nearer to its perfection. A single meal will be sufficient to satisfy a man for three days. Mankind will furthermore become so versed in the art of healing, and in the science

of physical culture that they will be able to withstand disease and death more successfully. Humility, peace, and liberality will be now and forever more zealously practised by men.

The millennium of Soshyos: The world, according to the Pahlavi texts, which carry onward the ideal teachings of Zaratusht in the Gathas as developed further in the Younger Avesta, in ever striving and tending toward final betterment, and will reach perfection in the millennium of Soshyos. It needs only the final touch of this greatest of the renovators to bring about this result for the eternal welfare of the universe. Men by this time, when these millennial conditions have been reached, have ceased eating meat, and subsist on milk and vegetables. Even milk, according to the Pahlavi works, is gradually given up, and water and vegetables form the only food of mankind. The Bundahishn, moreover, adds that, before the Resurrection and the Renovation of the universe occur, men will give up milk, vegetables and even water and they will ultimately subsist without food of any kind, and yet not die. Still another Pahlavi text states that during the period of the fifty-seven years of the activity of this last apostle mankind will be able to subsist for seventeen years simply on vegetables, then thirty on water alone and for the last ten years on spiritual food.

At this time according to the texts, when the world is ripe to welcome the last of the prophets, a virgin named Gobak-abu conceives immaculately the third seed of Zaratusht in the same manner as her two forerunners had done. At the age of fifteen she becomes pregnant and gives birth to the most illustrious Soshyos in the realm of Khvaniras. When the final saviour is thirty years of age, the sun stands still in the zenith of the sky for thirty days and nights; through his supernal power the demoniac nature among men will be broken. He will then cause the Resurrection and the future existence. His body, which is as radiant as the sun, partakes only of spiritual food and he is clad with kingly glory. Around him he looks with the power of six eyes and he it is that foresees the end of the Evil Spirit. He is the greatest renovator of the world. He comes to restore the dead to life, and to bring final perfection to the world.

Any kind of wickedness that may still be lingering, in spite of his supreme beneficence, will perish through his presence. The angels will enable mankind to co-operate with the great apostle Soshyos to rout Druj. In advance of his divine mission to the world he has met Ormazd in conference and has received the supreme sanction for his task. During the fifty-seven years of his work, he will drive out the drujes from the world, and will make the world eternally happy.

*Dasturji Dhalla has provided his chapter of 12 pages (423–433) with 108 Pahlavi references to present it in a condensed form [references not given here for the sake of brevity]. He has nothing on “Shah Bahram Varjâvand” even in his 9 chapters on “A Period of Decadence, from the seventh to the eighteenth century”. (pages 437–77).

Shah Bahram Varjâvand

The Persian Rivayats contain the questions asked by Parsi Mobeds and the answers given by Iranian Mobeds between 15th and 17th century CE. The following excerpts are from “The Persian

Rivayats of Hormazdyar Framarz and Others” [English translation and Notes] by Ervad Bamanji Nusservanji Dhabhar, Bombay , 1932:

Zand-e Bahman Yasht:

Dastur Borzu [of Iran in reply to a question asked by the Parsi priests]: “... Varas [hair taken for making ritual sieve for the Yasna liturgy] can be taken from the horse or the bull; but it is impossible (to prepare it) in these (evil) times. We possess varas (which is prepared) from ancient times and you should put into practice the institution followed by your predecessors. (This should be so) up to the coming of Varjâvand, Peshotan of Kai Vishtasp and Hoshedar of Zartosht. (page 418).

The Shedaspians [Christians] and those with dishevelled hair will arrive and will overpower the Iranian countries which I, Ormazd, have created. Each of the three enemies will infest Iran , and there will be so many banners of the Turks, Arabs and Arumans [Byzantine Christians] that Iran will be under the hoofs of the beasts of burden. and the third [battle] will be at (the end of) the millennium. That night, Varjâvand is born and the token of it is that the same night a star will fall on the ground from the sky and this will be manifest on day Ormazd of the month Aban [17 October]. They will bring him up with the damsels of the city and a woman will be the ruler of that city and that woman will nourish him. For him an army will approach from the west of India , which will have many and with the Hindu and Chinese army, they will attack the Arabs. ... (page 468)

.... At that time will be born Oshedar, son of Zartosht, who is a son from among (your [Zarathushtra’s]) offspring. This is said to be near the [lake] Kiyanseh, or his bringing up will be on the frontier of Kabulistan. When he will be thirty years old, he will come to Me who am Ormazd in conference.

At that time there will be a king in Chinistan or Hindustan , a descendant of the Kayans who, when 100 years old, will have a desire for women. A child will be born to him, whom they call Behram Varjâvand.

Then Oshedar comes to Behram Varjâvand for apostleship. He performs a miracle and cries out to the sun : “ Stand still.” The sun stands still in the midst of the sky for 10 days and nights. All men abide by the religion of Oshedar. Then Meher of the wide pastures [Avestan “Mithra vouru-gaoyoiti”] cries out: O Oshedar, the Zarothushtrotemo, restorer of the true religion! Cry out to the sun (to move on); for it is dark in [six regions of the earth]. Then Oshedar, son of Zartosht cries out to the sun: “ Move on!” Then on and all men believe in the good religion and they accept it. (page 470)

[Speaking about the calamities that will befall Iran], every person will conquer a place of his own and will rule with wickedness and will not by any means administer justice to men for the reason that he himself will not be in safety.

After this, the angel Meher sends a man to the shores of the sea of Padashkhargar near Varjâvand, saying : “Thou art such a king that all men are in difficulty and distress. Rule in such a way as was done by your fathers and grandfathers. If the inhabitants of the world are under oppression and distress, then what answer will you give to God. and

Varjâvand answers : “.... but I have neither treasure nor army, and the sovereignty can be exercised (only) with money.” That man carries back the message of Varjâvand to angel Meher. [He] says : “ Go, take up the treasure of Afrasyab and bestow it on his (Varjâvand’s) army.” He then shows him the treasury and opens it. A great army collects near Varjâvand and he again conquers the cities in a few days. The world comes under the sway of a king from amongst the (different) nations. The glory of Iran , the Kayanian glory, and the good Mazdyasnian religion reside in that city, and the world turns towards virtue and security becomes manifest. (page 480)

From Jamasb Nameh:

O king, know that the most terrible period of time will be when the wolf progeny of Turkestan will rush into the country of Iran , that is, they will enter with wickedness, and the religion will turn extremely weak and low. Then the Turks, Arabs and Rumans [Byzantine Christians] make warfare on the banks of the river Euphrates and on the frontiers of Shuristan [Syria]. At that time, the king, with the religion, will arrive, who is called Varjâvand Hamavand (i.e. the glorious and the victorious) and his prayers will be accepted by God the Great and the Glorious. ... (pages 490)

The “savior” story in its Persian version predicts in simple words that a king of the Kayanian descent, named Bahram, will carry the title of Varjâvand. He will be born on 17th October (year not given) in the eastern part of Iran . That makes him “Shah Bahram Varjâvand.” Although King of Iran, he will be residing somewhere in China/India without any financial resources. That will be reason for not undertaking the reconquest of Iran . Mehr Izad will show him the Turanian King Afrasiab’s treasury. With that procured, he will collect an army of Iranians, Indians and Chinese and will vanquish the three enemies of Iran—Byzantine Christians, Arab Muslims and Turk (invaders). He will be approached by the first Saoshyant, Hoshedar (Ukhshyat-ereta), for apostleship. It is the apostle who will then work miracles that will restore the world to its perfection. Shah Bahram Varjâvand is not predicted to play any further part.

Incidentally, the term *varjâvand* has its origin in the Avestan *varechavant*, literally “luster-having, brilliance-having = lustrous, brilliant, splendid.” It is used eight times: For the moon (Yasht 12:1–2, Mah Neyayesh 7), Rain Star Tishtrya (Yasht 8–49), Royal Kayanian Glory (Yasht 19:9, Yasht 19:72) and hero Thritha (Vendidad 20:1–2). The only name, which does not carry it, is verethraghna ‘smiting-enemy, victorious’, the Victory Yazata in the later Avesta. It has evolved into Bahrâm in Persian. Verethraghna/Bahram, the Victory Deity, has been mentioned for over 30 times in the Avesta and yet it has no connection whatsoever with Shah Bahram Varjâvand and even the term *varechavant*. Moreover, we have five of the Sassanian kings with the name “Bahram” and therefore, each of them is “Shah Bahram” in Persian and none of them carry the title of Varjâvand. The only person, whose one life story shows that he, the rebel army general, Bahram Chubin/Chubineh, went to India and finally China to get military help to overthrow Shah Khosrow Parviz (590–628 CE), but was finally killed in a battle, and the other story is that he went to India and China to get help to drive back the Arab Muslims, who had invaded Iran and overthrown the Sassanian rule (652 CE, 44 years later), but never returned, and it is he who is expected to come with his Indo-Chinese army and free Iran from the devastating Muslim supremacy. He is called Shah Bahram Varjâvand. He has already taken

about 1,359 years to come. How many more years, none of the long expectants has so far said but all along, they have been predicting that he is about to appear, a prediction that almost every expecting follower of any religion, which is awaiting the **Savior**, believes. It is common to all, nothing special about the Institutionalized Zoroastrianism.

Conclusion

That brings our survey to its end. It shows how the passage of time has added to a general term, coined and defined for selfless active, creative and promotive members—geniuses—of the human society in the Gathas. It has snowballed into its fanciful Pahlavi and Persian dimension of wait, wait and wait for three miracle-born miracle-workers and their miraculous heralding hero.

However, let us keep in mind the following two significant points:

- (1) The term *saoshyant* has been literally rendered as *sûd(o)mand* ‘benefactor’, the generic meaning of the word, in the Pahlavi translation of the Avestan texts. It evidently belongs to the Sassanian times or even earlier.
- (2) It is the Pahlavi writings of the post-Sassanian period of 8th century CE and later, all under the Muslim rule—Bahman Yasht, Bundahish, Dânak ud Mênôk-i Khrad, Dinkard, Shâyast Nêshâyast, Jamasb Nameh, and the still later Persian Rivayats—which give us the fanciful account of the three "saviors" and a preceding king to be born in an undefined age and an ill-defined exile. A deeper study of Bahman Yasht and Jamasb Nameh would fathom the frustration that fostered the idea of a “savior” to its present propagation.

To repeat, the points reveal how the broad general term of “benefactors” shrunk to be confined to three persons of miraculous births and miraculous accomplishments. The translator/s of the Avestan text was/were different in person, concept and time from those who commented and wrote on “Soshyans”. One account belongs to the period when Zoroastrianism flourished as the major religion in the world and the other was improvised during the worst disaster that had befallen it. One has “saoshyants” zealously serving the cause and the other is looking hard for a restorer of the lost grandeur. What else the disparate leaders in charge could do except console themselves and the laity by hoping for a miracle that would refloat the sunken ship.

To return to Saoshyant in the Gathas and the coherent Later Avestan instances, we see the logic of Zarathushtra's statement that the human society produces prominent persons who devote themselves in furthering and promoting the good life on this good earth. They are **BENEFACTORS** and not “**Saviors**”. He himself was one, an **extraordinary personality**, whose Divine Doctrine stands as a unique Guideline for proper progress through time. It is guiding and not goading. It is commending and not commanding. It is proposing and not prescribing. It is ever promoting, never retarding, ever up-to-date and never outdated. Always fresh and never stale; always refreshing and never stagnating!

And it guides devoted persons to grow into Saoshyants. That is why we see that those who followed its guidance, aspired to become Saoshyants, persons benefiting mankind and its natural

environment. They knew well that such a person had to be fully competent in his/her field of service. A person was only recognized as Benefactor when the service rendered proved so. In fact, the Gathas, particularly the Yatha Ahu master-stanza, Song Two and few more instances, are clear that a “Ratu”, a good gracious guide and “Saoshyant”, an outstanding dutiful Benefactor, are to be **ELECTED** on the basis of their competency in knowledge and experience. This makes it quite clear that no one can ever claim to be Saoshyant or Ratu. It is a person’s outstanding qualifications and services that make him/her qualify for the duty and the titles, and even that is left to be recognized by an aware people, an awake society.

Keeping in mind the “refreshing” stanza of the Gathas, given at the top of this essay, let us join our righteous predecessors and pray: “May we be the **BENEFACTORS**, may we be the victorious, may we be the friends of Ahura Mazda, we the righteous and the most helpful companions, who are the righteous persons practicing good thoughts, good words and good deeds”; and then translate our prayer into practical services, concrete works and real results in every field of mental science and physical comfort—Ushtâ, ‘Enlightenment’.

26 Tir 3740 ZRE = 17 July 2002 CE
15 Tir 3749 ZRE = 6 July 2011 CE
31 Farvardin 3757 ZRE = 20 April 2019