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**Cursing the *daēvas*  
as an Example of Verbal Aggression  
in the Zoroastrian “Declaration of Faith”?**  
A Preliminary Study

**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the notion of verbal aggression evident in Zoroastrian prayers. Although one may be surprised that a declaration of Zoroastrian faith, called *Fravarānē* (Yasna 12), begins with the words “I hate / abhor / am disgusted” instead of “I believe,” cursing (*nifrīn kunišn*) the demons is a pious religious act.

**KEYWORDS:** Avesta, Zoroastrianism, *daēvas*, verbal violence, faith, hate speech

Relatively new<sup>1</sup> but nowadays very popular term, *hate speech*, greatly mired in numerous controversies, has no single consistent definition outside specific legal frameworks. *The Cambridge Dictionary* defines it as “public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or

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<sup>1</sup> “Starting in the 1940s and 50s, various American civil rights groups responded to the atrocities of World War II by advocating for restrictions on hateful speech targeting groups on the basis of race and religion” (Walker 1994: 79).

sexual orientation.”<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that hate speech, grounded in and manifested by verbal violence has always existed, although as a legal term it might be a relatively new concept. Hence the question: can we talk about hate speech in reference to religious prayers? The answer is in the negative. Nevertheless, one cannot deny that verbal violence is not a new phenomenon at all. Communications of animosity or disparagement of an individual or a group on account of a group characteristic such as race or religion can be easily found in ancient texts, including the religious.

This paper aims to specific present forms of Zoroastrian verbal abuse using as an example the Avestan “declaration of faith” conventionally named *Fravarānē* (Yasna 12), “I declare” (*fravarānē*—1. Sg. Con. Aor. Med. of the verbal root *fra-var-* ‘to declare myself, believe; lit. to choose for myself’).<sup>3</sup> It dates to the earliest days of the Zoroastrian religious practice, but seems to have undergone some linguistic shift and subsequent recasting in the Old Avestan.<sup>4</sup> What is more important, it was probably intended to be recited before an open assembly, i.e. in public (Boyce 1992: 84, 104). The opening sentence of section one and of section four of this text show verbal aggression directed against the *daēvas*, i.e., the ancient Iranian demons. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the *daēvas* are not the victims here but rather the most hated foes and aggressors who threaten and harm faithful followers of Zarathustra. If verbal aggression can be defined as a characteristic that drives a person to attack the self-values and concepts of others by way of defending their own values and concepts,

<sup>2</sup> Entry: Hate speech. In: *The Cambridge Dictionary*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/hate-speech> (accessed 22.10.2023).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Av. *fra-var-* 1. Jemanden für sich auswählen als; 2. als religiöser Term. techn. a) ‘den Glauben (einer Religion) bekennen zu (einer Religion),’ b) ‘das Glaubensgelübde ablegen, sich zum Glauben bekennen’ < *var-* ‘wünschen, wählen,’ Praes. *vərən-* (Skr. *vr̥ṇīté*, Lat. *volō*) (AiW: 1360ff). In the F. Wolff’s translation: „Will ich das Glaubensgelübde ablegen” (Wolff 1910).

<sup>4</sup> Peterson, J. H. 1997. *Yasna 12: The Zoroastrian Creed*. <http://www.avesta.org/yasna/y12j.htm> (accessed on 20.10.2023).

we may agree that Zoroastrians do resort to it. However, they use verbal violence to defend themselves only out of fear.

Rejection of the *dēws*<sup>5</sup> is linked to Zoroaster's reform, and, as personifications of every imaginable evil, they are mentioned throughout Zoroastrian religious books. (...) The *dēws* are not simply a psychological or eschatological threat but a present reality in an embattled world (Williams 1994: 334).

It is also worth noting that most of the formal declarations of belief in the world's great religions begin with the words: "I believe." This is the case of Christianity where we have the Apostle's creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty" (Lat. *Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem*); in Judaism: *Ani ma'amin* "I believe"<sup>6</sup>; and the Islamic Shahāda: "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God" (Arab. *lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh, muḥammadun rasūlu-llāh*). However, the Zoroastrian creed commences with a formulaic damnation of the *daēvas*: *Nāismī daēvō!* "I curse the Daēvas!"

Yasna 12.1.

*Nāismī daēvō! Fravarānē mazdayasnō, zaraθuštriš, vī.daēvō, ahura.ṭkaēšō, staotā aməšanəm spəntanəm, yaštā aməšanəm spəntanəm. Ahurāi mazdāi varhavē vohumaitē vīspā vohū činamī. Ašāunē raēvaitē xvarənanuhaitē yā zī čičā vahištā, yejhē gāuš, yejhē ašəm, yejhē raocā, yejhē raocābīs rōiθβən xvāθrā* (Geldner 1896).

**I cause the daēvas to perish! I confess myself** (to be) a worshipper of (the Creator) Ahura Mazda, a follower of the religion revealed by the Prophet Zarathushtra, **inimical to** (the doctrines of) **the daēvas**, acting according to the Law of Ahura Mazda, a praiser of the Holy Immortals (and) a worshipper of the Holy Immortals. Unto Ahura Mazda, the Good,

<sup>5</sup> Middle Persian *dēw* (invariably written with the Aram. ideogram *ŠDYA*) 'demon, devil' (McK: 26).

<sup>6</sup> It is a prosaic rendition of Maimonides' thirteen-point version of the Jewish principles of faith. It is based on his *Mishnah* commentary to tractate Sanhedrin.

possessed of goodness, the Holy, possessing riches (and) Glorious do I attribute all things (of the world); because whatsoever things (are) best (are all His). Whose (i.e. the Creator Ahura Mazda's) universe, Righteousness, the lights (of the sky), splendour have blended with (the infinite) lights (in the sky). (Kanga 2014: 329)<sup>7</sup>

The Avestan *nāismī* (1. Sg. Praes. Act.) “I curse,” cf. the verbal root *naēd-*: *nāis-*: *nis-* ‘to curse, execrate, loathe, abhor’ (‘schmähen, verwünschen,’ AiW: 1034), corresponds to Skr. *nindāmi* “I curse,” *nindati* ‘blames, reviles, despises,’ *nind-* ‘deride, abuse, despise, blame’ (MacD: 141).<sup>8</sup>

Only after this strong opening statement does a faithful Zoroastrian say: *fravarānē* “I confess/I declare.” And s/he declares himself/ herself to be a *mazdayasnō* ‘Mazda-worshipper,’ *zaraθuštriš* ‘a follower of Zarathushtra,’ and *vī.daēvō* ‘inimical, rejecting, hostile to the Daēvas’ (*vī.daēva-* ‘gegen die D. gerichtet, ihnen feind’ (AiW: 1441), Middle Persian. transl. *jud-dēw* [*ywdt-šDYA*] ‘anti-demonic’ (McK: 47).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Translation by J. H. Peterson:

**I curse** the Daevas! I declare myself a Mazda-worshipper, a supporter of Zarathushtra, **hostile to the Daevas**, fond of Ahura’s teaching, a praiser of the Amesha Spentas, a worshipper of the Amesha Spentas. I ascribe all good to Ahura Mazda, and all the best, *Asha*-endowed, splendid, *xwarena*-endowed, whose is the cow, whose is Asha, whose is the light, may whose blissful areas be filled with light (Peterson 1997),

and the F. Wolff’s:

**Ich verwünsche** die Daeva’s! Als Mazdahanbeter, als Zarathustraanhänger will ich das Glaubensgelübde ablegen, **den Daeva’s feind**, Ahura’s Lehre zugetan, als Preiser der Amesha Spenta’s, als Beter der Amesha Spenta’s. Dem guten schätzereichen Ahura Mazdah erkenne ich alles Gute zu, ‘und all das Beste’, dem ashaehrwürdigen prächtigen hoheitsvollen, dem das Rind, dem das Ashaparadies, dem das Licht, dem (der Gedanke eignet:): ‘es sollen die wohligen Räume sich mit Licht erfüllen’ (Wolff 1910).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. other IE cognates: Armenian *anicanem* “I curse,” Greek *ὄνειδος* ‘reprimand, abuse,’ Gothic *ga-naitjan* ‘to taunt, to abuse,’ Lithuanian *niedėti* ‘to despise,’ Latvian *nīdēt* ‘to hate’ < PIE \*H<sub>3</sub>neid- ‘to abuse, scold’ (EDIV: 182).

The Avestan prefix *vī* ‘away, apart,’ corresponds to Skr. *vi-*, which expresses: separation, disjunction (apart, asunder, away, off, etc.). A collection of late Avestan texts that deals almost exclusively with the *daēvas*, i.e. their various manifestations and ways to defeat them, is titled *Vendidad* (*Vidēvdāt* or *Vidēvdād*), which is a contraction of *vī.daēvō-dāta* ‘given against the *daēvas*’. As Èmile Benveniste (Benveniste 1970: 37–42) first observed, the term *vī.daēva-* (“rejecting the *daēvas*”) qualified the faithful Zoroastrian with the same force as *mazdayasna-* (‘Mazdā worshiper’) and *zaraθuštri-* (‘Zoroastrian’)” (Williams 1994: 333–334).

In the section four of Yasna 12, the faithful Zoroastrian rejects the *daēvas* in public by insulting them (using abusive words):

*Vī daēvāiš ayāiš, avayhūš, anarētāiš, akō.dābiš sarəm mruyē; hātəm draojištāiš, hātəm paošiš-tāiš, hātəm avayhutəmāiš. Vī daēvāiš, vī daēva-vaṭbiš, vī yātuš, vī yātumaṭbiš, vī kahyāciṭ hātəm ātarāiš, vī manōbīš, vī vacōbīš, vī šyaoθanāiš; vī čiθrāiš. Vī zī anā sarəm mruyē, yaθanā drəgvātā raxšyantā.*

I do not accept (or I hate) the chieftainship of the *daevas*, wicked, without goodness, not going in the straight path, (and) evil-knowing (who are) most untruthful, filthy (or polluted) (and) wicked among the existing ones. Just as I hate the chieftainship of the false (and) tormenting (persons), in the same manner verily hate openly through (my) thought, word and actions the chieftainship of the *daevas* and of those belonging to the *daevas* (i.e. of those going on the path of the *daevas*), the wizards and belonging to the wizards, of any wicked (man) whatsoever among the existing ones. (Kanga 2014: 330)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the Petersen’s:

I reject the authority of the *Daevas*, the wicked, no-good, lawless, evil-knowing. The most *druj*-like of beings, the foulest of beings, the most damaging of beings. I reject the *Daevas* and their comrades. I reject the demons (*yātu*) and their comrades. I reject any who harm beings. I reject them with my thoughts, words, and deeds. I reject them publicly. Even as I reject the head (authorities), so too do I reject the hostile followers of the *druj*.

As one can see, the believer not only rejects (*vī... mruyē*<sup>10</sup>) the authority (chieftainship) of the Daēvas (*vī daēvāiš... sarəm mruyē*), but also calls them: *aγāiš* (Instr. Pl.) ‘the wicked’ (*aγā-* “schlecht, böse, schlimm,” Skr. *aghā-*, AiW: 47), *avaṇhūš* ‘the not-good, without goodness’ (*a-vaṇhav-* ‘ungut,’ AiW: 174), *anarətāiš* ‘the lawless, i.e. not going in the straight path of truth’ (*an-arəta-* ‘gesetzlos, dem heiligen Recht feind,’ Skr. *án-rta-*, AiW: 120), *akō.dābīš* ‘the evil-doing, evil-knowing’ (*akō-dā-* ‘Böses, das Böse schaffend,’ AiW: 47). He then moves on to abuse them even more, by using the superlative forms of adjectives: *draojištāiš* (Instr. Pl.) ‘the most *druj*-like, i.e. the most untruthful’ (*draojištā* cf. *draog- draoγa-* ‘lügnerisch; Lüg, Lüge,’ AiW: 767–768), *paošīštāiš* ‘the foulest, the most filthy’ (*paošīšta-* ‘der fauligste, stinkendste,’ cf. *paoš-* ‘faulig,’ AiW: 818), *avaṇhutəmāiš* ‘the worst, the most wicked (among the existing ones)’ (*avaṇhutəma-* ‘der wenigst gute, böseste,’ AiW: 174).

In the next sentence a believing Zoroastrian continues: “Just as I hate the chieftainship of...” (*vī ... zī anā sarəm mruyē*): *daēvavaṭbiš* (Instr. Pl.) ‘belonging to the daēvas (i.e. of those going on the path of the daēvas)’ (*daēva.vant-* ‘Daeva-genosse,’ AiW: 671); *yātuš* ‘the sorcerers, magicians, wizards’ (*yātu-*, Skr. *yātu-*,

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And the Wolff’s:

Auf sage ich der Gemeinschaft mit den schlimmen schädlichen gesetzlosen Böses schaffenden Daeva’s, den lügnerischsten der Seienden, den stinkendsten der Seienden, den schädlichsten der Seienden; Auf mit den Daeva’s, auf mit den Daevagenossen, auf mit den Zauberern, auf mit den Zauberergenossen; auf mit denen, (die) jedweden unter den Seienden Schaden tun: auf in Gedanken, auf in Worten. auf in Taten, auf in Kundgebungen. Auf sage ich denn so der Gemeinschaft mit jeglichem feindseligen Druggläubigen“ (Wolff 1910).

<sup>10</sup> “The meaning of Avestan *mru-* (Skr. *brū-*) is to ‘speak’; but when this root is used with different prefixes, its meaning changes: e.g. *nī-mrū-* means ‘to request,’ ‘to demand’; *paiti-mru-* means ‘to answer’; ‘to reply’; *ā-mrū-* means ‘to call, to invoke’; *vī-mrū-*, *antare-mrū-* means ‘to abjure, to deny, to forsake, not to accept, to renounce’” (see Kanga 2014: 330). Cf. Av. *mrav-*: *mru-* ‘sagen,’ *vī-mrav-* ‘auf-sagen, entsagen’: *vī ... mruyē* (1. Sg. Praes. Med.) (AiW: 1196).

Pers. *jādū* (Skr. *yatu-dhāna*<sup>11</sup>) ‘conjuration, magic; juggling; a conjurer,’ PED: 349); *yātumatbīš* ‘magician’s fellows and comrades, those belonging to the wizards’ (*yātu.mant-* adj. of *yātu-*); *ātarāiš* ‘destroyers, harassers, tormenting persons’ (*ā-tara-* ‘Bedränger, Angreifer von daēvischen Wesen, AiW 316).” He rejects all of them (“I verily hate them”) with his: *manābīš* ‘thoughts’ (*manah-*, Skr. *manas*, Gr. *menos*); *vacābīš* ‘words’ (*vacah-*) and *šyaoθanāiš* ‘deeds’ (*šyaoθna-*). He rejects them in public *čiθrāiš* (*čiθra-* ‘manifestus; Kundgebung,’ AiW: 586), calling them *drəgvātā raxšyantā* ‘hostile drug-believers’ (*drəgvant-* ‘der zur Drug<sup>12</sup> hält und gehört, Genosse der Drug,’ AiW: 774; *raxšyant-* AiW: 1528).

In his short synopsis to the Zoroastrian creed (A Short Synopsis of *Dīn-no kalamo*) Kanga explains:

I am the hater and destroyer of all the daevas, and idol-worship. I am the praiser of the Ameshaspands or Holy Immortals and their glorifier. I am the worshipper of the Creator of the entire world who is Omnipotent and Omniscient, Ahura Mazda. I accept to remove the distress and difficulty from the houses of the Mazda-worshipping people and to protect the cattle and beneficent animals from thieves and robbers. I hate to live under the authority of lying and wicked men, and of the sorcerers. (Kanga 2014: 332)

To answer the question about hate speech in Avestan prayers, we must understand who the foes, i.e., the *daēvas*, were.<sup>13</sup> Old Avestan *daēva-* derives from Old Iranian *\*daiva-* < Indo-Iranian *\*daivá-* ‘god’ (cf. Skr. *devá-*) < PIE *\*deiwó-* with the same meaning. While the word for the Vedic spirits and the word for the Zoroastrian entities are etymologically related, their function and thematic development is altogether different. Originally, the term was used to denote beings found

<sup>11</sup> Skr. *yātu* m. ‘sorcery; kind of fiend’: *-dhāna* ‘kind of fiend or goblin’ (MacD: 244).

<sup>12</sup> Av. *draog-* ‘lügen, trügen,’ *draoga, draoγa-* ‘lügnerisch; Lüg, Lüge’ (AiW: 767–768).

<sup>13</sup> For more on Iranian *daēvas* see: Benveniste 1967; 1970; Bianchi 1977; Boyce 1975; 1979; 1992; Duchesne-Guillemin 1962; Haug 1902; Kellens and Pirart 1988; Nöldeke 1923; Nyberg 1938; Shaked 1967; Williams 1994.

in folklore which predates its use in scripture. Vedic *devá-* is variously applied to most divine beings, including gods and many of the *asuras*. Likewise, at the oldest layer, Zoroastrianism's *daēvas* are originally also gods (albeit gods to be rejected), and it is only in the later texts that the word evolved to exclusively refer to evil creatures. In the Gathas the *daēvas* are 'gods that are (to be) rejected' (Herrenschmidt & Kellens 1993: 559–602). They are censured as being incapable of discerning the truth (*aša-* 'Asha, the law,' Skr. *ṛta-*; Old Persian *arta-*) from falsehood (*druj-* 'Drug, the lie'). This meaning is also evident in the Xerxes' *daiva* inscription (XPh) in the Old Persian of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>14</sup> In the *Younger Avesta*, the *daēvas* are clearly hostile entities, divinities that promote chaos and disorder. In later tradition the *dēws* (New Persian *div* integrated to Islam<sup>15</sup>) are personifications of every imaginable evil. The word *daēva.yasna-* (literally, 'one who sacrifices to *daēvas*') denotes adherents of other (false) religions and thus still preserves some semblance of the original meaning in that the *daēva-* prefix still denotes other gods (Herrenschmidt & Kellens 1993: 599–602). According to Kanga:

<sup>14</sup> XPh 35-41: *Utā atar aitā dahyāva āha yad ātya paruvam daivā ayadiya. Pasāva vašnā Auramazdahā adam avam daivadānam viyakanam utā pati-yazbayam: daivā mā yadiyaiša yadāyā. Paruvam daivā ayadiya avadā adam Auramazdām ayadaiy artācā brazmaniya utā aniyašca āha tya duškartam akariya ava adam naibam akunavam aita tya adam akunavam visam vašnā Auramazdahā akunavam.*

And among these countries there was a place where previously demons (*daiva*) were worshipped. Afterwards, by the grace of Ahuramazda I destroyed that sanctuary of demons, and I proclaimed: The demons shall not be worshipped! Where previously the demons were worshipped, there I worshipped Ahuramazda at the proper time and in the proper manner. And there was other business that had been done ill. That I made good. That which I did, all I did by the grace of Ahuramazda (Kent 1950: 151).

<sup>15</sup> Pers. *dev, dīv* (S. *deva*) 'A devil, demon, genius, spirit, ghost, hobgoblin; a sort of woolen armour; a horse; anger, passion, force, violence; brave; stratagem, fraud, deceit; losing the way, deviating, led astray; perverse'; *dewi dīn* 'Satan'; *dewi saped* 'Satan transformed into an angel of light; name of a celebrated champion slain by Rustam'; *dewi shabīna* 'The nightmare'; *dewi shahwat* 'The demon of lust' (PED: 554).



*Daeva* in the Avesta has four different meanings according to the opinion of Sheth Kharshedji Rustomji Cama, or in other words we learn of four types of dev from the Avesta: (1) daevas having the appearance of man; (2) daevas producing diseases; (3) immoral daevas (4) daevas decreasing prosperity: (1). These persons who produce wickedness by increasing diseases or by decreasing prosperity or by ruining morality, are called the daevas having the appearance of men; e.g. Zohak, wicked people of Gilān and Māzandarān, etc. (2). Those who emit diseases and untimely death by whatever means or objects are also called ‘daevas,’ e.g. a statement is made in Vendidad frakart VII about some daevas residing in the tombs. Here the meaning of *daeva* is to be understood as impure. They produce diseases while coming out of the tombs. (3). Whatever incites us to follow the path of wickedness is also termed ‘*daeva*,’ e.g., slander, deceit, heresy, evil eye, impurity, etc. (4). Whatever causes disturbance in the spread of prosperity is also known by the term *daeva*, e.g. the demon Apaosha prevents rain i.e. the causes responsible for the prevention of rain are known by the name ‘*apaosha*’. Excessive cold is regarded as the queen of demons. See Sheth K.R. Cama *Zarhosht Nāmu* VI... “Who is *daeva*.” (Kanga 2014: 10)

In the *Khordeh Avesta Bā-Māyeni* (text, transcribed into Gujarati script and accompanied by a Gujarati translation, was prepared and published in 1880 by the celebrated Avesta scholar, Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga), one can also find other prayers cursing the wicked *demons*. It is worth mentioning that the book has remained a standard work in the Parsi community for the purpose of prayers, and among the scholars—an indispensable reference book. In a prayer *Nīrang-ī gomez mālidan*, which is a form of Zoroastrian exorcism, Ahriman the Accursed is called Satan. The *Nīrang*<sup>16</sup> should be recited on waking up to a brand-new day. Composed in Persian, is reads as follows:

<sup>16</sup> Pers. *nīrang* ‘incantation, magic, sorcery, deception’ (PED: 1441); Middle Persian *nērang* ‘incantation, charm, spell’ (McK: 58).

*Šekaste, šekaste*<sup>17</sup> *Šeytān Ahriman gajaste*<sup>18</sup> *kār-o-kerdār; na rasad gajaste kār-o-kerdār! Si-o-sē Amēšāspand dādār Hormazd pirozgar pāk. Ašaone Ašəm Vohū.*

(May) the Satan (be) defeated and destroyed! (May) the works and workers of Ahriman the accursed (be) destroyed! May not works and workers of (that) accursed (Ahriman) reach(me)! Thirty-three Holy Immortals (Ameshaspands) and the Creator Hormazd are victorious and holy (Ibid.: 2–3).

The *Kem-nā-Mazdā* is a prayer which invokes Ahura Mazda’s protection and compassion. It is also a powerful *Nīrang* which can be recited as a stand-alone prayer. It is next only to the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* in terms of its protective powers. In this prayer, Zarathushtra asks Ahura Mazda:

Who will give me and my followers protection when evils look at me with the intention to hurt, except Thy Fire (Divine Energy) and Mind (Consciousness), by whose actions the progress of the world takes place. Please reveal to me the religious knowledge associated with that. Which are your words for protection which smite the enemy, and which are for victory and protection. Do show me a spiritual teacher who can lead me to knowledge of material and spiritual worlds, so that Divine Guidance (Sraosha) can come through higher consciousness (Vohu Manah). Such wisdom comes only to those unto whom Mazda wishes and considers deserving.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Pers. *shikasta* ‘broken; discomfited, routed; reduced to straits; ashamed, penitent; proud; weak; sick, wounded’; *shikasta shudan* ‘to be broken; to be distressed; to be diminished; to become less rigid or intense’ (PED: 753).

<sup>18</sup> Middle Pers. *gizastag* ‘accursed, hateful’ (McK: 36).

<sup>19</sup> “Kem Na Mazda”—Invoking Divine Protection. In: *Parsi Times*. February 18, 2017. <https://parsi-times.com/2017/02/kem-na-mazda-invoking-divine-protection/> (accessed on 12.10.2023).

The following words, found in the *Kem-nā-Mazdā*, are taken from *Vidēvdād* (Fargard 8.21: Funerals and purification, unlawful sex; see footnote ‘j’ in Kanga 2014: 3); they read as follows:

*Pāta nō ībišyāntat<sup>20</sup> pairi Mazdāosča Ārmaitišča speñtasča, nase<sup>21</sup> daēvī druxš, nase daēvō-čīθre, nase daēvō-frakaršte, nase daēvō-fradāite, apa druxš nase, apa druxš dvāra, apa druxš vīnase, apāxeðre apa-nasyehe, mā mereñčainīš gaēθāo astvaitīš ašahe. Nemasčā yā Ārmaitīš izāčā. Ašam Vohū.*

O Hormazd and Spenta Ārmaiti! Protect us from the envious ones. (from here) Perish thou, O devilish Druj, perish thou, O devil’s spawn; perish thou, O (evil) sown by the daevas, perish thou, O follower of devil’s law; perish O Druj, disappear utterly, vanish and entirely perish, in the North, O Druj. (so that) corporeal settlements of righteousness (may) not (be) fit to be destroyed. Homage (be) unto right thought and prosperity! (Kanga 2014: 4)

It is also worth mentioning here that the Avesta uses one set of words belonging to the creations of Ahura Mazda (the *Ahuric* lexica) and another for those formed by Angra Mainyu (the *Daevic* lexica). The German orientalist, Christian Bartholomae (1855–1925), was the first to reflect on such specific synonyms in Avestan. In his dictionary of the Old Iranian languages, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, among other entries he had elaborated on, we can find terms of interest with Bartholomae’s comments: *von daēvischen Wesen*, or *von ahurischer Wesen*. It is quite clear that different words were used for beings associated with Ahriman, and different for those associated with Ahura Mazda (Gray 1927: 427). Interestingly, offensive and derogatory vocabulary was used by pious beings only towards Ahriman’s creatures. So, it was not the *devas* who hurled invectives against the pious and the righteous, but quite the opposite. The former of these theories was advanced by Leo Frachtenberg (1908: 269-89), and the latter by Hermann Güntert (1914).

<sup>20</sup> Av. *ībišyant-* ‘feindlich, feind, inimicus’ (AiW: 816).

<sup>21</sup> Av. *nas-* ‘verschwinden, sich fort machen, weichen’ (AiW: 1055).

So, returning to the question posed at the beginning of the essay, as to whether the believers of Zarathustra used verbal aggression, one may answer in the affirmative. But one cannot call their utterances “hate speech,” for the term assumes that such a speech is used by the aggressor towards one who, through this act, becomes his victim. As we know, the original aggressors here were the *daēvas*, against whom Zoroastrians could only defend themselves by way of abusive words. Although one might be surprised that a declaration of faith can begin with the words “I curse” instead of “I believe,” cursing the demons (*nifrīn kunišn*) is a religious act (Menasce 1973: ch. 123, 225, 236). “Man’s daily duty and eschatological role are to smite demons through good action and prayer” (Williams 1990: 48.79 ff.).

### Abbreviations

- AiW = Bartholomae, C. 1904. *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*. Strassburg: Trübner.  
 EDIV = Cheung, J. 2007. *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb* (Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series, vol. 2). Leiden–Boston: Brill.  
 MacD = Macdonell, A. A. 1929. *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary with Transliteration, Accentuation, and Etymological Analysis Throughout*. London: Oxford University Press.  
 McK = MacKenzie, D. N. 1971. *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.  
 PED = Steingass, F. J. 1892. *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to Be Met with in Persian Literature*. London: Routledge & K. Paul.

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