



EaseAlchemy

Twelve Words for Ease

From the Iranian Tradition

Twelve words, each with its script, its etymology, and one small practice. Free to read here and to download.

AYDA · EASEALCHEMY · ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

CONTENTS

The Twelve Words

MOVEMENT ONE · THE AVESTAN GROUND

ONE	Humata	<i>Good Thought</i>
TWO	Hukhta	<i>Good Word</i>
THREE	Hvarshta	<i>Good Deed</i>
FOUR	Asha	<i>Truth, Cosmic Order</i>
FIVE	Atar	<i>Sacred Fire</i>

MOVEMENT TWO · THE SHARED SWANA REGISTER

SIX	Rūh	<i>Spirit, the Breath of Life</i>
SEVEN	Nafas	<i>Breath and Self</i>
EIGHT	Sabr	<i>Patience as Strength</i>
NINE	Rahm	<i>Mercy, the Womb</i>

MOVEMENT THREE · THE FARSI HOME

TEN	Āsāyesh	<i>Ease as Baseline</i>
ELEVEN	Bāzgasht	<i>The Return</i>
TWELVE	Kimiyā	<i>Alchemy</i>

Introduction

These twelve words are a map.

Each one names something your body already knows, carried in a tradition that has held this knowing for more than three thousand years. The Iranian civilisation was shaped by Zoroastrianism, by Sufism, and by a long line of poets and physicians from Ibn Sina onward. It has always understood ease as a baseline rather than an achievement. Ease is the state you were made for, and the work is in remembering it.

The twelve words move across three layers of the tradition's language.

The first five are Avestan, the ancient Indo-Iranian language of the Zoroastrian scriptures. It was spoken in eastern Iran more than three thousand years ago and is preserved now in the Gathas and the Yasna liturgy. These are the oldest words, the ground the tradition stands on. Where an Avestan word lives on in modern Farsi (Persian) or crosses into Arabic, I have included both, so that readers from across the SWANA region meet themselves on the page.

The next four live in both Farsi and Arabic, carried across the SWANA region by centuries of exchange between Iranian and Arabic-speaking traditions. A reader in Tehran, Doha, Cairo, or Beirut will recognise each of them.

The final three are Farsi, the living language of the tradition, arriving at alchemy as the closing word. Kimiyā is the Farsi and Arabic root the English word alchemy derives from, and it is the word at the heart of EaseAlchemy.

Each word comes with its script, its etymology, a short reflection on what it teaches about ease, and one small practice. The practices are small on purpose. Ease arrives through daily remembering rather than through large acts.

You do not need to read these in order. Open at any word and begin. Stay with one word for a week. Read the whole thing in one sitting and let the arc move through you.

I am Ayda. I have spent twenty-five years in health settings, and across those years I kept returning to the words my ancestors had for the same conditions those settings were trying to name. These twelve words are part of that return.

MOVEMENT ONE

The Avestan Ground

*The oldest layer of the tradition. Five words
spoken in the sacred language of
Zoroastrian scripture, with their Farsi and
Arabic echoes where these exist.*

Humata

هومتا • اندیشه‌ی نیک

Good Thought

Avestan. Hū (good) and mata (thought). Modern Farsi: Andīsheh-ye nīk. In Arabic the concept is carried through nīyah (intention) and fikr (thought).

Humata is the first word of the Zoroastrian ethical triad, the three words that together form the oldest ethical architecture in the Iranian tradition. It means good thought. What it asks for is the deliberate orientation of the mind toward what is truthful, generous, and life-giving, rather than the performance of optimism.

In the Zoroastrian understanding, a life is shaped first at the level of thought. The thoughts you hold repeatedly become the shape of the self that acts. Humata is the practice of choosing which thoughts to feed.

Contemporary cognitive science arrives at the same recognition. The mind is a field of voices, and the capacity to select which of them to attend to is itself a foundation of wellbeing. Humata named it more than three thousand years earlier.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Once today, notice a thought that has appeared in your mind and ask whether you would want to become the person who holds it. If the answer is no, let the thought pass without feeding it. You do not have to fight it or suppress it. Notice it, and let it move on. This is humata.

Hukhta

هوختا • گفتار نیک

Good Word

Avestan. Hū (good) and uxta (spoken, uttered). Modern Farsi: Goftār-e nīk. In Arabic, related to the register of qawl ṭayyib (good speech) in Qur'anic language.

Hukhta is the second word of the triad. It means good word, and it asks for the discipline of speaking truthfully, warmly, precisely, and with care for the person who hears it.

The Iranian tradition has always held speech as a moral act rather than a transaction of information. What you say changes what is real. A word of cruelty moves the world in one direction, and a word of warmth moves it in another.

In Sufi practice, hukhta extends further. The word becomes sacred technology, the breath carrying meaning from one heart to another. The warmth or the threat in a voice is registered by the body of the listener before the mind has caught up. The tradition has understood this for millennia. The word that lands in the ear lands also in the body.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Once today, before you say something that matters, pause for one breath. Ask whether the word is good, meaning truthful, warm, and necessary. If the answer is no, let it go unspoken. If the answer is yes, speak it. This is hukhta.

Hvarshta

هورشتا • کردار نیک

Good Deed

Avestan. Hū (good) and varshta (done, performed). Modern Farsi: Kerdār-e nīk. In Arabic, related to the register of ʿamal ṣāliḥ (righteous deed) in Qur'anic language.

Hvarshta is the third word of the triad. It means good deed, the action that makes thought and word complete. In the Zoroastrian understanding the triad is one teaching rather than three. Thought alone does not carry it, and word alone does not carry it. The three must be in alignment, thought becoming word becoming deed, for the teaching to be lived rather than merely spoken.

This is the original teaching of integrity, more than three thousand years before the word integrity entered English. To be integrated is for thought, word, and deed to be one continuous act. Where they split, the body holds the dissonance, and that holding is itself a form of dis-ease.

The triad is greeted as one phrase in Iranian Zoroastrian communities. Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta, spoken at Nowruz, written on walls, taught to children. It is the oldest ethical formula of the tradition and the most contemporary teaching it offers.

A SMALL PRACTICE

At the end of today, ask whether your thought, your word, and your deed were the same. Ask it of the matter that mattered most rather than of every moment. If they were the same, rest in the alignment. If they were not, notice where they split. Noticing is already the beginning of the return.

Asha

اشا • راستی • الحق

Truth, Cosmic Order

Avestan. Asha (truth, right order, the way things actually are). Modern Farsi: Rāstī (truthfulness, straightness). Arabic: al-Ḥaqq (the truth, the real, one of the names of God).

Asha is the foundational concept of Zoroastrianism. It means truth, though not truth as accurate information. Asha is truth as cosmic order, the pattern underlying reality, the way things are when nothing is distorting them.

The opposite of asha is druj, the lie, the distortion, the misalignment that produces suffering. The Iranian tradition understands dis-ease as druj in the body, the body caught between what is and what is being performed. Ease is the return to asha, the body realigning with its own truth.

In Arabic the same cosmic register is carried through al-Ḥaqq, one of the ninety-nine names of God, meaning the Truth, the Real. The Sufi journey toward al-Ḥaqq is the journey the Zoroastrian tradition calls the return to asha. Two traditions naming the same thing in different languages.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Once today, notice a moment when you were about to perform. Saying what would be acceptable rather than what was truthful, holding a face that did not match what was underneath. Notice the distance between the two. The noticing is the practice, and it is the beginning of the return to asha.

Atar

آتر • آتش • آذر • نار

Sacred Fire

Avestan. Atar (fire, the sacred fire, the divine flame). Modern Farsi: Ātash (fire) and Āzar (sacred fire). Arabic: Nār (fire, carrying both literal and spiritual registers in Qur'anic language).

Atar is the Zoroastrian sacred fire, the flame kept burning in the fire temple, the presence of Ahura Mazda's light in the world. The tradition understands atar as the presence of the divine made visible, carried across generations through the unbroken continuity of the fire.

In the Iranian tradition, fire is the most sacred element. It purifies, it illuminates, and it changes what it touches. The word atar carries all of that: the fire that changes, the light that reveals, the warmth that holds.

Atar carries the fullest teaching on ease in the tradition. Ease asks for the right fire rather than the absence of heat, warm enough to change something and never so hot that it burns. When a body comes into its own warmth and settles there, the tradition calls that atar.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Find a small flame today. A candle, a gas ring, a match briefly lit. Sit with it for thirty seconds. You do not need to photograph it or think about it. Receive the warmth and the light it gives, and notice what shifts in your body. Atar is always available, and the practice is only in sitting with it.

MOVEMENT TWO

The Shared SWANA Register

Four words that live in both Farsi and Arabic, carried across the SWANA region by centuries of exchange. A reader in Tehran or Doha, Cairo or Beirut, will recognise each of these as their own.

Rūh

روح

Spirit, the Breath of Life

Farsi from Arabic. Rūh means spirit, soul, the animating breath, the presence of life in the body. In the Qur'an, rūh is the breath breathed into the human form at creation. In the Iranian tradition it names the non-physical dimension of being alive.

Rūh is what makes a body living rather than functioning. When someone is thriving, Iranians say rūhash shād, their spirit is glad. When someone dies, they have given their rūh back to what gave it. The word does not separate the physical fact of breathing from the fact of being alive, because the tradition does not separate them either.

In the Iranian and Arabic spiritual traditions, rūh is the portion of a person in direct relationship with the divine. It is the part of you not exhausted by the demands of a life, and not diminished by what you have endured. It stays intact beneath everything else.

Where a person is in distress, both traditions speak of the rūh as heavy, troubled, or crushed. Where a person is at ease, the rūh is described as light, glad, or at rest. Tending to ease, across the SWANA region, is tending to the rūh.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Close your eyes for one minute. You do not need to still your mind. Ask how your rūh is today, meaning the part of you that does not change when the body is tired or the mind is loud. Listen. The answer may arrive as a word, an image, or a feeling, and whatever comes is the beginning of the tending.

Nafas

نفس

Breath and Self

Farsi from Arabic. Nafas carries two meanings at once, breath and self. In Iranian and Arabic thought these are one thing. The self is the breath, and the breath is the self.

When an Iranian takes a long breath before speaking, they are gathering their nafas. When someone is gasping, they have lost their nafas. In Arabic, nafs carries the same meaning and extends to the ego-self, the soul, the seat of desire and discipline. The Sufi tradition speaks of the stages of the nafs, from the commanding nafs that drives the ego to the peaceful nafs that has returned to ease.

Where rūh is the divine breath, nafas is the breathing body itself. The rhythm, the rise and fall, the continuous exchange between inside and outside that is the ground of being alive. The two are inseparable without being the same.

Contemporary science places breath at the centre of how a body settles. The Iranian and Arabic traditions placed it there millennia ago, and they went further. They named it as identity. You are not a self who breathes. You are a self who is breath.

A SMALL PRACTICE

For one minute, breathe with the awareness that your breath is your self, rather than a mechanism your body runs. Notice what changes when the breath is not separate from the one breathing. Breathing this way is a return to what nafas has been teaching for more than three thousand years.

Sabr

صبر

Patience as Strength

Farsi from Arabic. Sabr means patience, though not passive waiting. Sabr is active endurance, the strength to stay steady inside difficulty without collapsing and without hardening. It is one of the most valued qualities across the Iranian and Arabic traditions.

The Qur'an mentions sabr more than seventy times. Iranian poetry returns to it across centuries. The word carries weight because it names a strength that looks, from the outside, like stillness. The farmer has sabr. The mother has sabr. The one who is grieving has sabr.

Sabr belongs to someone who knows that forcing the moment will break what is being made. The tradition understands it as a strength so understated that it can be mistaken for weakness, until you recognise that no other strength holds what sabr holds.

The Iranian and Arabic traditions built sabr into daily life. The long meals, the unhurried welcome of guests, the refusal to rush a conversation or a grief. These are sabr made cultural rather than lifestyle choices.

A SMALL PRACTICE

The next time something frustrates you, a slow queue, a delayed reply, a conversation that will not move, try holding it with sabr rather than trying to accept it. Feel the difference between resignation, which flattens you, and sabr, which holds you upright inside the difficulty. One is defeat. The other is strength.

Rahm

رحم

Mercy, the Womb

Farsi from Arabic. Rahm carries two meanings from a single root, mercy and the womb. In both languages, the word for the organ that holds and nourishes the unborn child is the word for holding another person with tenderness. Mercy is womb-like. The womb is merciful.

In Arabic, two of the ninety-nine names of God, Ar-Rahmān and Ar-Rahīm, derive from the same root as rahm. The divine is named as that which holds life the way a womb holds life, without judgement, without condition, with continuous provision. This is the oldest image of unconditional love in the SWANA tradition.

Rahm sits apart from romantic love, from warmth, and from kindness. It is the tenderness that holds what is vulnerable. The child, the grieving friend, the person in crisis, the body that has been hurt. It is the capacity to be present with another person's pain without needing to fix it and without needing to flee from it.

The Iranian and Arabic traditions have always understood that a person cannot thrive without rahm, without having been held in it, and without the capacity to hold others in it. Ease is only possible where rahm is present. A life without rahm is a life in constant vigilance, and a life with rahm is a life that can finally exhale.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Think of one person whose presence allows you to exhale. Spend thirty seconds in gratitude for their rahm, the tenderness they carry for you, whether they name it that way or not. Then think of one person to whom you give rahm, and notice the quality of holding you extend to them. The practice is to receive rahm consciously, and to give it consciously.

MOVEMENT THREE

The Farsi Home

The final three words, in the living language of the Iranian tradition. Ease as baseline, the return as practice, and alchemy as the word this guide has been moving toward from the first page.

Āsāyesh

آسایش

Ease as Baseline

Farsi. From the root ās-, meaning calm, rest, settling. The suffix -āyesh forms a state or condition. Āsāyesh is the state of being at rest, the baseline your body knows before anything asks anything of it.

Āsāyesh is the ease that was there before the effort began, rather than the ease you arrive at after it. In the Iranian tradition, āsāyesh is understood as the body's baseline, the state it returns to when nothing is demanding anything of it. You do not earn āsāyesh. You remember it.

The tradition named it more than three thousand years ago and built a culture around protecting it. The gardens, the poetry, the long meals, the unhurried welcome of guests, the scent of rose water in ordinary houses. All of it is āsāyesh as a daily practice.

This is the word at the heart of EaseAlchemy. When I say ease is your nature, return to it, the word ease stands for āsāyesh. Every other word here is a path that leads back to this one.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Sit somewhere you will not be interrupted for three minutes. Close your eyes. You do not need to try to relax. Notice what is already at rest in you, the places in your body that are not working, not holding, not bracing. Begin at your feet and move slowly upward. You are locating ease that was already there rather than creating it. This is āsāyesh.

Bāzgasht

بازگشت

The Return

Farsi. From bāz (back, again) and gasht (turning, wandering, journeying). Bāzgasht is the return to what was always there, the coming back to a place one never fully left.

Bāzgasht is the practice that holds all the others. Ease is something you return to rather than something you build. Every word here is a form of bāzgasht, a coming back. You are remembering who you were before you forgot, rather than becoming someone new.

The Iranian tradition holds this as its central teaching. The Sufi path is a bāzgasht to the beloved. The Zoroastrian path is a bāzgasht to the original light. You travel back to find ease rather than forward, and the travelling back happens in small moments, every day, whenever you remember.

A body does not build a new capacity for settling. It returns to the capacity that was interrupted. What was obscured becomes visible again, and the tradition has been naming this for more than three thousand years.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Once today, pause and ask what you are returning to right now, rather than what you are doing or where you are going. The answer might be your breath, your body, your home, a person, or a word from this page. Whatever it is, let the returning be the practice. This is bāzgasht, and this is the work.

Kimiyā

کیمیا • الکیماء

Alchemy

Farsi and Arabic. Kimiyā (Farsi) and al-kīmiyā (Arabic) mean alchemy, the art of transmutation, turning base material into gold. The English word alchemy derives from the Arabic, carried into Europe during the translation of Arabic scientific texts in the medieval period.

Kimiyā is the word at the heart of EaseAlchemy. It means more than the literal science of transmutation. In Iranian and Arabic usage, kimiyā has come to mean anything rare and precious, the small thing that changes everything, the catalyst that turns one state into another.

The alchemy of ease is the oldest teaching of the tradition, and it is not metaphor. Given the right conditions, the body changes. What was held in dis-ease becomes held in āsāyesh. What was braced becomes open. The conditions are what a practitioner can offer: the right warmth, the right word, the right silence, the right presence. The body does the rest.

This guide closes with kimiyā because it is the word that holds all the others together. Humata, hukhta, hvarshta, the ethical ground. Asha, the truth beneath it. Atar, the fire. Rūh, nafas, sabr, rahm, the breath, the body, the patience, the mercy. Āsāyesh, the baseline. Bāzgasht, the return. Kimiyā, what happens when all of these are in place.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Look back across the twelve words. Notice which one met you most, meaning the one that arrived in your body as recognition rather than the one you understood best. That word is your starting point. Begin there. The alchemy asks for one word lived honestly rather than twelve. Everything else follows.

Closing

These twelve words are made to be returned to rather than read once. One word a week would carry you through a season. One word a month would carry you through a year.

If anything here has met you, I write each Monday on the tradition, on the conditions that produce unease, and on the work of returning to ease in the actual conditions of a modern life.

I am Ayda. EaseAlchemy is my work, a consultancy and education practice rooted in Iranian and SWANA ancestral wisdom and twenty-five years in health settings. I am based in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

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EaseAlchemy

Ease is your nature. Return to it.

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