

# My Golden Book on Zoroastrianism



A Basic Guide  
with  
FAQ's





# My Golden Book on Zoroastrianism

Edited by:  
Meher Bhesania



Sculpture of a 'Winged Bull.' A protective spirit and a symbol of power.

**This Book belongs to:**

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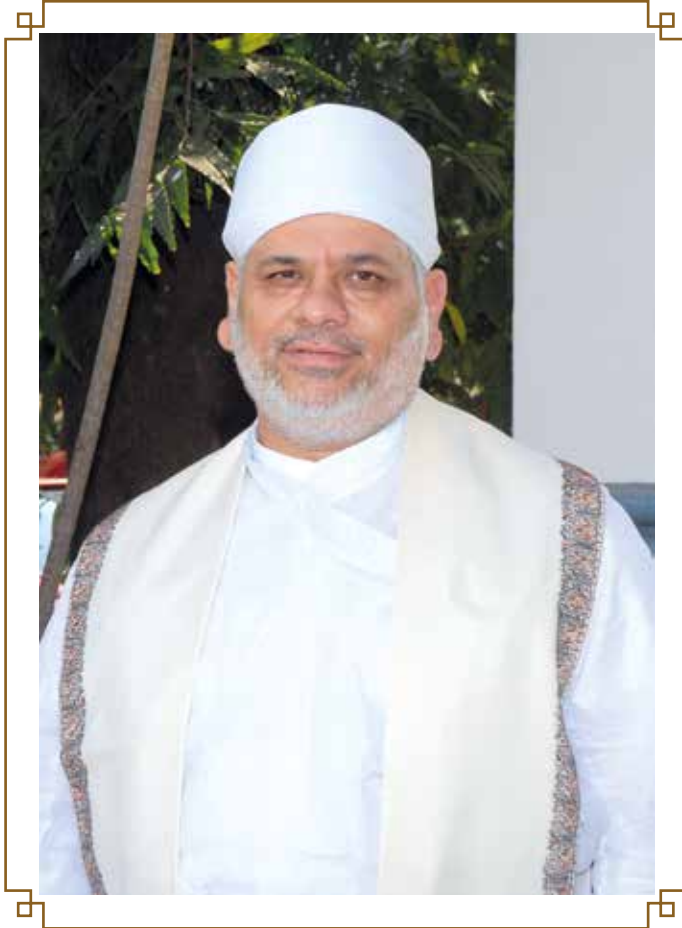
## Gratitude

**Heartfelt thanks to:**

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Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor



# FOREWORD

Praise be to the ‘Exalted Fravashi and Soul of Spitaman Zarathushtra’ who showed us the path to truth and righteousness, to live in harmony with love and use knowledge and intelligence to achieve progress. This religious thought is as relevant today, as it was over 3500 years ago.

In the new millennium, the Zoroastrians have spread far and wide in the world. It is, therefore, imperative that we uphold our religious tenets, identity and perpetuate our traditions and customs for the community to survive as a recognizable entity, in the years to come, making for a better, stronger and more cohesive community one driven by the message of our Prophet Spitaman Zarathushtra.

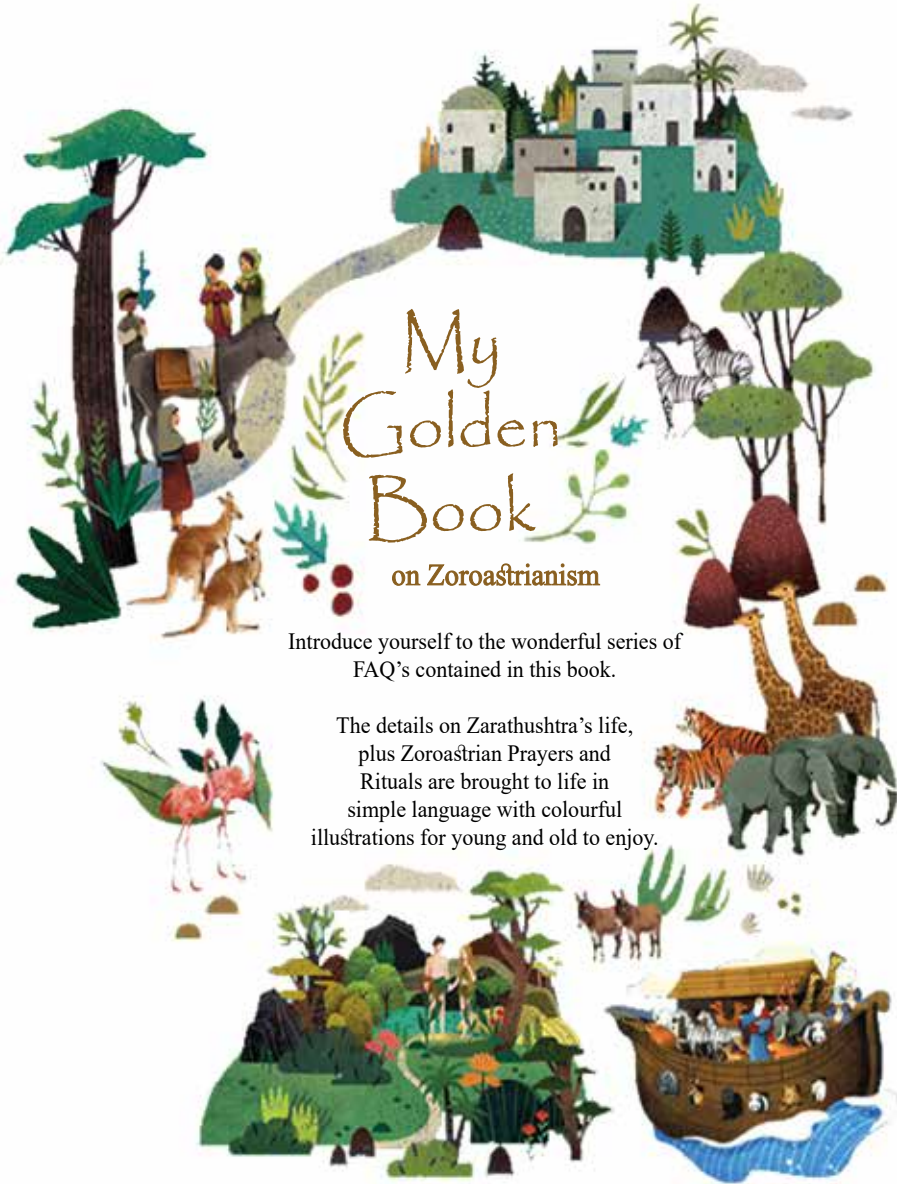
‘*My Golden Book on Zoroastrianism*,’ captures the beautiful image of the community and provides accurate information on different aspects of Zoroastrianism. The book comes with an offering of a Compact Disc containing the right gestures for doing the ‘Kasti’ with lucid instructions and evocative music.

I am glad that this book edited by Meher Bhesania and the DVD produced by her are both being launched on the auspicious occasion of the ‘*3rd Iranshah Udvada Utsav*’ in December, 2019. The book will certainly inspire all Zoroastrians especially the younger generation.

As we know, Art and Culture are a shared universal language, a language that can tell the story of a community’s journey. This book tells the story on community’s rich culture, heritage, its age old rituals and religious practices in a simple manner.

My best wishes to the Cultural Committee of the ‘Global Working Group’ for embarking on this excellent initiative and coming out with an easy and simple book of question and answers on Zoroastrianism.

Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor  
Udvada Atash Bahram



# My Golden Book

on Zoroastrianism

Introduce yourself to the wonderful series of FAQ's contained in this book.

The details on Zarathushtra's life, plus Zoroastrian Prayers and Rituals are brought to life in simple language with colourful illustrations for young and old to enjoy.

# Introduction

Proper knowledge of Zoroastrian religion is essential for the development of our faith and its joyful practices.

*'My Golden Book on Zoroastrianism'* is an elegant volume that contains frequently asked question and answers on Zoroastrianism. The story starts from the ancient past and moves on to the present era. The contents have been prepared after endless hours of spadework, research and review of several books written by internationally renowned Zoroastrian scholars. My special thanks to Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia, Khojeste Mistree and Firoza Punthakey Mistree for their support to this project. The information is quite detailed and will satiate the knowledge and understanding of Zoroastrians both living in India as well as those beyond the seas.

All Zoroastrians are encouraged to share this information with their family members and friends, who are bearers of this ancient faith. Similarly, Teachers who conduct religion classes on 'Zoroastrianism' in India and overseas, are encouraged to include this information in their syllabus for children.

These frequently asked question and answers are more in the story form that will help the Zoroastrians to acquire better understanding on various topics relating to Zoroastrianism and the book will serve as an excellent go-to resource in future.

There are around 200 important question and answers divided into 12 Chapters in this book. Each chapter has been arranged with an activity page meant for colouring, learning and making personal notes. The Compact Disc containing the right gestures for doing the Kasti with lucid instructions and evocative music will be helpful to all.

Zoroastrianism is a joyful religion. Despite antiquity its followers have preserved their customs, beliefs, liturgical ceremonies, text and prayers. This volume will certainly enable them to grow their understanding further and appreciate the ethos of this great religion.

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Meher Bhesania

*May 'Ahura Mazda' Bless You Always!*



# CHAPTER - 1

## Ahura Mazda

### **Who is Ahura Mazda?**

Ahura Mazda also known as Ohrmazd, Hourmazd, Hormazd, and Hurmuz, is the creator and highest deity of Zoroastrianism. The literal meaning of the word Ahura is “Lord” or ‘Creator,’ and Mazda means “wisdom”.

### **Can we see Ahura Mazda?**

It is very difficult to see Ahura Mazda as he has no form, shape or colour. One can only know him through his creations and his work. Hence the best way to know him is to understand his 101 names, as these names are based on his attributes, qualities and powers.

### **How can we communicate with Ahura Mazda?**

We can communicate with Ahura Mazda by offering our sincere prayers with utmost devotion and unflinching faith. Even during difficult times, one should not lose faith in him, hold on to him and seek his help in order to come out of difficult times.

### **What does Ahura Mazda do?**

Ahura Mazda is omniscient, omnipresent and a Divine energy who takes care of everything in the universe created by him and makes everything wonderful.

### **What is the significance of 101 names of Ahura Mazda?**

All 101 names of Ahura Mazda are very powerful and efficacious. That is why chanting individual names from amongst the 101, in a specific way, helps in solving particular problems or difficulties.

### **Why should we consider Ahura Mazda as our friend?**

Among all the relationships in our life, the friendship with Ahura Mazda, is perhaps the best, most rewarding and most reliable of all relationships. The reassuring sentiments of safety, security and protection always stay with us, if we consider Ahura Mazda as our friend. The thought that Ahura Mazda loves us, knows what is best for us and works in our interest, should forever be etched out in our mind.

## How can we visualize Ahura Mazda?

In order to visualize Ahura Mazda we have to look for words which are most frequently used to describe him. He is referred to as '*Minoān mino*,' that is, "spirit among the spirits." There are other words like '*raevant/rayomand*' and '*khvarenanghant/khorehmand*' that mean "full of light" and "full of energy." Thus we have to visualize Ahura Mazda as a radiant being, brimming with Divine energy who is present everywhere.



God exists.

The proof is in HIS CREATION.

Go on and colour this picture as brightly as you can.

**May the 'Mazdayasni' race  
live forever in grace!**



# STORYBOARD OF



Endless  
Light



Sky



Water



Earth



# AHURA'S CREATIONS



Trees



Animals



Human  
Beings



Fire





# CHAPTER - 2

## The Story of Creation

### **What is the creation story according to the Zoroastrian religion?**

In the Zoroastrian story of creation, it is stated that, in the beginning there was endless light, which was the place and location of Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda), the Creator, who is omniscient, eternal, infinite and a totally good being, worthy of worship..

### **What choices did Ohrmazd have when creating the world?**

Ohrmazd had two choices, either to let the creations in Endless Light remain in a static, unmoving, spiritual form, or He could make the creations in physical form, and then contend with the existence of Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the Evil Spirit. Ohrmazd, chose the latter. He fashioned the creations in physical form and asked His creations to help him fight Ahriman. According to the Divine plan, it is the task of all human beings to generate good thoughts, words and deeds which will eventually result, in making Ahriman ineffective, at the end of time.

### **What is the name of the Zoroastrian book that narrates the story of Creation?**

The name of the book which outlines how the world was created by Ohrmazd, is the Bundahishn which means Creation in the Pahlavi language.

### **What does the Bundahishn outline?**

The Bundahishn story outlines how and why Ohrmazd created the physical world we live in and it describes the final defeat of the forces of evil. In the Bundahishn, time symbolically, comprises of 12000 years, which is further sub-divided into four parts of 3000 years each. In Zoroastrian cosmogony, 12000 years is a symbolic number, and it should not be compared to normal earth years.

### **What happened in the years 0 to 3000?**

During this period, Ohrmazd's creations were in a spiritual state i.e. unthinking, unmoving and intangible. Ohrmazd (through all-knowingness) perceived the existence of evil. Ahriman moved from the station of darkness, through the void to the borders of the station of light, where he saw light for the first time and tried to attack it. Ohrmazd offered Ahriman a pact of peace, if he agreed to give up his wicked ways. Ahriman did not accept Ohrmazd's offer, which he saw as weakness on the part of Ohrmazd. Ohrmazd then gave an ultimatum to Ahriman, and stated that there will be a fixed contest for 9000

years known as the Gumezishn, during which period, He promised, Ahriman would be defeated. Ohrmazd recited the '*Yatha ahu Vairyo*' prayer and Evil returned to the station of darkness and fell into a state of stupefaction for the next 3000 years.

### **What happened in the years 3000 to 6000?**

From the years 3000 to 6000, all passed according to the will of Ohrmazd. He first fashioned the six other Bounteous Immortals or the Amesha Spentas, from His own self by chanting the '*Yatha ahu Vairyo*.' Ohrmazd together with the other six Amesha Spentas, with the help of His luminous white fire, created the seven creations, of the sky, waters, earth, plants, animals, man and fire. Ohrmazd chose to be the guardian of man, His finest creation. All the seven creations were created in a physical state, in order to trap Ahriman and his legion of 'divs' at the end of 9000 years – during the Gumezishn period.

### **What happened in the years 6000 to 9000?**

Ahriman, the evil spirit arose from his abode of darkness and seeing the beautiful world created by Ohrmazd, attacked it wanting to destroy it. The world fell into a lamentable, chaotic state as a result of Ahriman's actions. The soul of the Cow (good vision) pleaded with the Divine Beings of the celestial world, to send a redeemer to save the world from chaos and restore peace and happiness within God's creations in the physical world. Spitaman Zarathushtra was chosen as the saviour to redeem the world from the onslaught of Evil in the year 9000.

### **What does the Story of Creation (Bundahishn) state will happen in the years 9000 - 12000?**

In the Bundahishn it is stated, that three messiahs (Saoshyants) will be born posthumously, at an interval of a 1000 years, after the death of Spitaman Zarathushtra. The three Saoshyants will be born from the seed of Zarathushtra and Havovi, miraculously preserved in Lake Kasaoya, where it is being watched over by 99,999 fravashis. It is said that at a 1000-year interval, a virgin will come and bathe in the lake and bear a child from the seed of Zarathushtra. In other words, the Saoshyants will be men born of human parents.

### **Which Saoshyant will be born in the 10th Millennium?**

In the 10th millennium, a precursor to the Saoshyant by the name of Peshotan will appear with a group of 150 righteous men, who will restore order and faith in the world. Thereupon, the first Saoshyant Ukhshyat.erata, 'he who makes righteousness grow', will be born. The sun will stand still for 10 days at noon and creation will flourish for three years, after which evil will strike once again.

## **Which Saoshyant will be born at the beginning of the 11th Millennium?**

The second Saoshyant Ukhshyat.nemah, ‘he who makes reverence grow’ will be born. The sun will stand still for 20 days and there will be great abundance and prosperity for 6 years, after which evil will strike again.

## **Which Saoshyant will be born at the end of the 11th Millennium?**

The third posthumous son of Zarathushtra, known as Astvat.erata ‘he who embodies righteousness’, will be born. This will happen 57 years before the great moment known as the ‘Making Wonderful’. During this period, the Resurrection of the physical body will take place, and the sun will stand still for 30 days. Then, the Last Judgement will follow, and the souls of the living and dead from heaven and hell, will pass through a river of molten metal. After which the purified souls of all human beings will be re-united with their physical bodies and become perfect in form. Evil will retreat to its place of darkness. During this time, the final Yasna will be solemnized by Ohrmazd and the last sacrifice of the bull Hadhayans will be performed. The Parahaoma libation from the Yasna ceremony, will be imbibed by all the resurrected bodies and the whole of creation will become perfect and immortal.

## **What will happen in year 12000?**

‘The Making Wonderful’ will be completed and the Gumezishn or the period of conflict will come to an end. Wizarishn or the period of separation will take place, when time will cease to exist. The world will never grow old, never decay and never die, and the world created by Ohrmazd will be restored to a state of complete harmony and blissfulness.

## **What is meant by the terms Tan-i pasen, Resurrection, Last Judgement and Frasho-kereti?**

The word Tan-i pasen means ‘future body’ fashioned in a perfect resurrected form. The word Resurrection (Rastakhiz) means ‘rising of the dead’. When the resurrection takes place, each soul will be reunited with its original physical body, now recreated in a perfect state, by Ohrmazd. The Last Judgement will occur when the resurrected souls will pass through the river of molten metal. For the souls from heaven, it will feel like warm milk, whereas for the souls which have languished in hell, they will be scorched for the last time, after which they will be liberated from hell, as Zoroastrianism does not believe in the concept of eternal damnation. The word Frasho-kereti or Frashogird, means ‘making fresh or making anew’. It is the final event at the end of time, also known as the Making Wonderful, when evil will be completely weakened and made ineffective and the world will be restored and renewed to a perfect state. This new blissful existence will be free from evil, wickedness, hunger, thirst, disease and death. All the creations will by then have evolved, into a perfect spiritual and physical state – timeless and eternal.

## Activity Sheet



Take a good look at God's wonders.  
They will take your breath away.  
Colour this picture as brightly as you can  
as God's entire collection is full of glory.



This picture shows the wonderful Creations of Ahura Mazda.  
There is the sea vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number - living things both large and small. Colour this picture with vibrant colours to make your rendition look beautiful.



## Spitaman Zarathushtra

A great Iranian Prophet who founded the  
Zoroastrian religion in Iran



# CHAPTER - 3

## Spitaman Zarathushtra

### **Who was Spitaman Zarathushtra?**

Spitaman Zarathushtra or ‘Zoroaster’ as he was called by the Greeks, was a great Iranian Prophet who founded the first monotheistic religion known as Zoroastrianism in Iran. Zoroastrianism was also the state religion of three mighty Persian Empires – the Achaemenians, Parthians and Sasanians from 550 B.C.E. to 652 C.E. Zarathushtra was divinely selected and appointed as a Prophet by Ahura Mazda. Zarathushtra remains a historical figure, a genius, a first teacher and a sage whose teachings brought a new vitality and understanding among his followers.

### **What is the meaning of Zarathushtra’s name?**

While the meaning of Zarathushtra’s name is speculative, it may be translated to mean – “possessor of golden camels,” however, his followers prefer to call Him - “He of the Golden Light.”

### **When did Zoroastrianism come into existence?**

Scholars suggest that Zoroastrianism developed in the middle of second millennium (1500 B.C.E. – 1200 B.C.E.) and was founded by a great Iranian Prophet Zarathushtra.

### **What is the birth place of Zarathushtra?**

The place where Zarathushtra was born remains speculative but linguistic evidence suggests that he was born somewhere in the region around the Aral Sea in a settled pastoral society in Eastern Iran, a part of Airyana Vaejah, the ancient land of Aryans.

### **Describe the pre-birth legend associated with Zarathushtra?**

Zarathushtra was born in a Divine way. The Pahlavi Book Denkard states that three spiritual elements came together for the conception of baby Zarathushtra. His ‘*Khwarr*’ (divine glory), his ‘*Fravahr*’ (guardian spirit) and his ‘*Tan gohr*’ (his physical body) were united in his mother Dughdova to form the baby created and guided by Ahura Mazda. The ‘*Khwarr*’ (divine glory) came from the light of the sun station to the moon station and then passed onto stars. From there it descended to the hearth-fire of Zarathushtra’s



maternal grandfather, Frahim.rvana. zoish's home. The fire burned perpetually without any fuel. From the hearth fire, the '*Khwarr*' passed onto Frahim.rvana's wife Freni, the mother of Dughdova. From her the '*Khwarr*' radiated onto Dughdova's body. It was a light so bright that those around her were puzzled and afraid.

### **What did the '*Devs*'(the evil ones) do?**

The '*Devs*' afflicted the minds of those in their society. They believed that Dughdova would grow up to be a sorceress and turned the pressure on her father to send her away. So Dughdova's father sent her to the house of Spitaman family whose son Pourushasp eventually married her.

### **What happened to the '*Fravahr*' of Zarathushtra?**

Zarathushtra's '*Fravahr*' which pre-existed in the abode of Ahura Mazda was escorted by Nairyosangha (the Divine messenger) and Yima-Khshaeta (the radiant one from heaven) and was accompanied by the Amesha Spentas Bahman (the Good Mind) and Ardibehesht (representing the Righteousness, Truth and Order). On Ohrmazd's instructions they placed the '*Fravahr*' in the stalk of a '*Hom*' plant. The '*Fravahr*' sat within the beautiful tall stem and bathed in endless light. The Divine Beings placed the stem upon a tall tree which was vibrant with green and shining leaves.

### **How did the '*Fravahr*' of Zarathushtra come into Dughdova?**

According to tradition, after Pourushasp and Dughdova were married, they were walking in the meadow, when Amesha Spentas, Bahman and Ardibehesht took Pourushasp towards the tall tree on which the '*Hom*' stalk had been placed. Pourushasp seeing the beautiful '*Hom*' stalk wanted to cut down the tree, but Amesha Spenta, Bahman persuaded Pourushasp to climb the tree and bring the '*Hom*' stalk down. Pourushasp gave the spiritual stalk to Dughdova and in this way the '*Fravahr*' of Zarathushtra came into possession of Dughdova before the conception of Zarathushtra.

### **How did the ‘Tan gohar’ of Zarathushtra come into Dughdova?**

The ‘*Tan gohar*’ (the physical body) was entrusted to Yazatas, Khordad and Amardad, the divine guardians of water and the plants. They created rain so the rainfall brought joy and prosperity to the world of cattle and man. Pourushasp saw the rich pastures nourished by the rain and led six cows out to graze and they became full of milk. He milked the cows and in the milk he pounded the stalk of the ‘*Hom*’ plant together with the spiritual ‘*Tan gohar*’ of Zarathushtra. Both Dughdova and Pourushasp drank the milk with crushed stem of the ‘*Hom*’ plant. In this way Ohrmazd transmitted the spiritual essence of Zarathushtra to Dughdova and Zarathushtra’s ‘*Khwarr*’, ‘*Fravahr*’ and ‘*Tan gohr*’ became united in Dughdova.

### **What did the Demons try to do to Dughdova when she conceived Zarathushtra?**

Fearful of the Divine birth the demons tried to kill Zarathushtra in the womb of his mother. Once the evil spirits made Dughdova very ill and forced her to go to a wicked physician for remedy which would have killed the baby before it was born. But a voice from heaven called out to her and told her not to go and instead wash her hands and offer some meat and butter to the Holy fire and to make a broth of meat and butter and consume it. She followed the instructions given by the Divine voice and was soon cured.

### **Which day is celebrated as Zarathushtra’s birthday?**

Zarathushtra was born on ‘*Roz-e Khordad*,’ ‘*Mah-e Farvardin*’ and this day is known as ‘*Khordad Saal*’ – the symbolic birthday of the Prophet.

### **Why did Prophet Zarathushtra smile at birth?**

He smiled at birth as he was aware of his Divine appointment as a Prophet on this earth whose mission was to overpower evil. It is this foreknowledge that evil would be vanquished at the end of time that made him joyous. So he had nothing to fear or cry.

### **What was Zarathustra’s father’s name?**

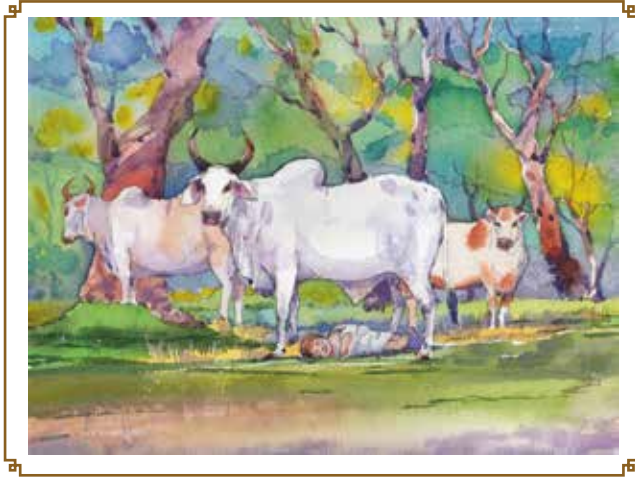
His father’s name was Pourushasp meaning “possessor of grey horses.”

### **What was Zarathustra’s mother’s name?**

His mother’s name was Dughdova meaning “milkmaid.”

### **How many brothers did Zarathushtra have?**

Rathushtar and Rangushtar were Zarathushtra’s two elder brothers and Nodriga and Nivedis were his two younger brothers.



### **How many children did Zarathushtra have?**

Zarathushtra had three sons – Isat.vastra (head of the priestly class); Hvare.chithra (sunfaced one) and Urvatat.nara (commending men.) He also had three daughters – Freni, Thriti and Pouruchisti. Havovi was Zarathushtra's wife.

### **Zarathushtra is supposed to have three sons born posthumously? Who are they?**

In apocalyptic tradition, Zarathushtra is said to have three sons born posthumously and according to the sacred texts, the seed of Zarathushtra is preserved in Lake Kasaoya and at an interval of 1000 years a maiden will bathe in the lake and a child will be miraculously born to each maiden. Each child will be a Saoshyant (redeemer/messiah) infused with divine grace and sent by Ahura Mazda to renovate and restore the world. The third Saoshyant will be born 57 years before the "Making Wonderful" when the forces of the evil will be weakened and the world will be restored to a perfect undying state.

### **Describe the attempts made on Zarathushtra when he was a young baby?**

The evil forces of Devs, the Kavis and Karpans did everything in their power to kill baby Zarathushtra and corrupted the minds of people and convinced Pourushasp that Dughdova's radiance from her was a sign of evil so he should do away with the child. So Pourushasp laid the baby on a pyre of wood and then set aflame but the baby remained unscathed as Adar Yazad cooled the fire. Next, the baby was put in the path of a herd of cattle but the child remained protected as a white cow inspired by Gosh Yazad stood

over the child and protected it. Then the child was placed in the path of horses, but a stallion stood over the baby and protected it. Finally the infant was placed in the lair of a she-wolf hoping that the she-wolf would kill the baby but Bahman Yazad brought a ewe to the den and the ewe nurtured the baby and the she-wolf did not harm the infant.

**Who were the two evil magicians that continued to connive against young Zarathushtra?**

They were Durasrob and Bratroresh.

**What happened when Durasrob tried to kill Zarathushtra?**

Durasrob, once, went to kill baby Zarathushtra at the house of Pourushasp with a sharp dagger. As soon as he raised the dagger to stab the child, he instantly, lost strength in his hands and they were paralysed.

**At what age was Zarathushtra placed under the tutelage of a wise man?**

At the age of seven years Zarathushtra was placed under the tutelage of Burzin Kurush who guided young Zarathushtra to uphold and follow the path of truth.

**Describe Zarathushtra as a child.**

Zarathushtra was a happy and kind child. He wanted others to be happy and content in their pastoral lives.

**What happened when young Zarathushtra once fell ill?**

When young Zarathushtra once fell ill, the two evil magicians Durasrob and Bratroresh visited the home dressed as physicians and gave Zarathushtra a poisonous potion to drink. Zarathushtra through the protection of Divine grace knew the evil intentions and refused to drink the medicine and ordered the evil sorcerers to leave and admonished his father for having invited these two evil magicians to their house. When the wicked sorcerers were returning home they were both attacked by a fatal crippling disease suggesting clearly that Zarathushtra was under the protection of Divine Beings and those who intentionally conspired to kill him would themselves be destroyed.



**Describe the legend associated with the Spitaman family when Zarathushtra was 15 years old?**

When Zarathushtra was 15 years old his brothers asked their father to divide the wealth and allocate their inheritance among them but the only thing Zarathushtra chose as his share was the Kasti (Kusti-girdle) as his inheritance, leaving all the other wealth to his brothers. This shows his spirituality and close contact with the Divine.

**How did Zarathushtra help the herdsmen during famine time?**

Zarathushtra gave away all the fodder to the herdsmen as they were suffering from famine in that area. Besides Zarathushtra was also compassionate to animals. One day, he saw a starving dog and five puppies. By the time he could find some bread for the dog, he died, so Zarathushtra fed the puppies.

**When did Zarathushtra leave his parents home?**

He left his parents' home at the age of 20 in search of truth.

**Why did Prophet Zarathushtra go to Mount Ushidaren?**

Zarathushtra had many questions in his mind on good and evil, pain and misery that remained unsatisfactorily answered, so he went to Mount Ushidaren to contemplate and receive revelation.

## **What happened to Zarathushtra at the age of 30 years?**

One day, when he went to fetch water from river Daitya for the sacred '*Haoma*' ceremony and waded into the waters, he saw Amesha Spenta Bahman, a shining being, who took Zarathushtra into the celestial court of Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) from whom he received a series of seven revelations over a period of ten years. By this Divine revelation and the '*Yatha Ahu Variyo*' prayer given by Ahura Mazda, Zarathushtra embarked upon his journey and became a great Iranian Prophet.

## **What are the 5 religious teachings of Zarathushtra?**

- Monotheism – belief in one God – Ahura Mazda.
- The existence of the Spiritual world.
- The two opposing forces in the universe – good and evil.
- The immortality of the soul.
- The sanctity of Creations.

## **What is Zarathushtra's biggest gift to his people?**

His principle of "Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds" and to lead a good Zoroastrian life.

## **Who helped Zarathushtra to spread Zoroastrianism?**

King Vishtaspa and Queen Hutaosa the then rulers of Eastern Iran helped him to spread the faith.

## **What happened at the court of King Vistasp?**

Zarathushtra was persecuted by the wizards and sorcerers at King Vishtaspa's court. He was wrongly imprisoned by the King as his teachings were not acceptable to the counsellors at the King's court.

## **How did Zarathushtra's release come?**

His release came when he miraculously cured King Vishtaspa's favourite horse Aspe-Siha by chanting the '*Ahunavar*' prayer.



### **What boons did Zarathushtra ask King Vishtaspa after curing his horse?**

Zarathushtra asked for four favours:

- King Vishtaspa should accept his teachings.
- King Vishtaspa's son Isfandiar should promote and support the new religion
- Queen Hutaosa should accept the new faith
- Those who had conspired against him should be punished.

### **What are the three gifts the Prophet gave to King Vishtaspa?**

The three things were:

- The Spiritually burning fire - '*Adar Buzin Meher*'
- A Cypress tree ('*Azad Sarva*') which had a message for the King on every leaf.
- 21 Nasks (Volumes) of Avesta scriptures, containing all the knowledge of the world.



## **What is Prophet Zarathushtra seen holding in his hands in various photographs?**

Prophet Zarathushtra is seen holding different things in his hand in different photographs.

- The '*Navgar*' - a nine knotted stick, used by priests, mainly to perform certain higher rituals like the Bareshnum and '*Vanot-ni- Baj.*'
- The '*Gurz*' - a weapon devised by Peshdadian King Faridun to overpower the evil Zohak. It's a mace with the head of a cow.
- The '*Fire*' – it is one of the three spiritually created fires called Fire '*AdarBurzin Meher.*' This Fire had the quality of not being hot (so it would not burn the hand if held in the hand).
- The Scroll of the Avesta – containing 21 Volumes which embodies all the wisdom in the world.

## **What does the word '*Gatha*' mean?**

The word '*Gatha*' means Divine songs. Zarathushtra sang them thousands of years ago. His teachings are preserved in these songs. They are his Divine revelations. There are 17 sacred songs. Each is called a '*Haiti*' (HA) for short. They have the same rhythm and are in five groups. They are all in Avesta language.

## **How many '*Gathas*' are there in all?**

- *Ahunavaiti* (7 HA)
- *Ushtavaiti* (4 HA)
- *Spenta Mainyu* (4 HA)
- *Vohu Khshathra* (1 HA)
- *Vahishta Ishti* (1 HA)

## **What is the meaning of the festive day '*Din-beh-Mino Marespand*'?**

The '*Din-beh-Mino Marespand*' falls on '*Marespand Roj*' of '*Aspandad Mah,*' during the '*Muktad* days.' It is to celebrate the day on which King Vishtaspa accepted Zarathushtra and proclaimed him as the chosen Prophet of Ahura Mazda.

### **Are Zoroastrians “fire worshippers”?**

No, they are not fire worshippers and do not regard fire as a personified deity. In Zoroastrian religion fire is seen as the omnipresent energy of Ahura Mazda. It also stands for the “inner fire” or Divine spark in a human being. The fire burning in the Zoroastrian temple or at home is a constant reminder that we should always keep our “inner fire” alive.

### **Why does Prophet Zarathushtra wear a white ‘Pagri’ on his head?**

Zarathushtra belonged to a priestly family. The title ‘*Athravan*’ (priest) is prefixed to his name. Since the white ‘*Pagri*’ (turban) is one of the main insignia of priesthood even to this day, Prophet Zarathushtra is shown wearing the white ‘*Pagri*’ in pictures.

### **What is the day of passing away of Zarathushtra known as?**

It is known as ‘*Zarhost-no-diso*.’ It falls on ‘*Khorshed Roj*’ of ‘*Mah-Dae*,’ It is the day when the prophet passed away from the material existence to the spiritual existence bringing an end to his journey in the physical world.

### **Is Zoroastrianism a living religion?**

Yes, even after 3500 years the religion is still a living religion practiced by many Zoroastrians in the world who persevere against all odds to follow Zarathushtra’s teaching at the heart of which lies Asha – the Truth.

FAQ’s based on the article of Vada Dasturji Dr. Firoze Kotwal on ‘The Birth and Legends of Zarathushtra’ in the book ‘*Zarathushtra and the Origins of Zoroastrianism*.’

## Activity Sheet



Colour this picture of Zarathushtra praying on the top of Mount Ushidaren and pondering over many questions and receiving a series of revelations from Ahura Mazda.  
Remember Zarathushtra wore white clothes.



Fire is seen as the  
Supreme symbol of purity in  
Zoroastrian religion.



# CHAPTER - 4

## Religion

### **Who is a Prophet?**

A prophet is a man who receives revelations from God.

### **What is Religion?**

It is a unified system of beliefs and practices which helps the man to relate to the ultimate conditions of his existence and gives him the tool to understand himself.

### **What is the need for Religion?**

Religion helps in bringing together a group of people to form a distinguishable faith and community by giving them an identity of purpose. The religious system helps to express, codify and reaffirm the central values of a group of people in such a way, so as to maintain the devotional as well as the ethical fabric of that society.

### **What does the word '*Fravashi*' mean?**

'*Fravashi*' is the pure spiritual part of God that is given to guide our souls. The '*Fravashi*' guides the soul in the physical as well as the spiritual world.

### **What is the role of '*Urvan*' in Zoroastrianism?**

'*Urvan*' means a chooser. One who chooses between right and wrong, good and evil and between temporary and eternal.

### **What does the word '*Spenta Armaiti*' mean?**

'*Spenta Armaiti*' stands for motherly aspects, love, understanding, tolerance and devotion. '*Spenta Armaiti*' also looks after the earth whom we call mother earth.

## **What is the significance of Faravahar or Asho Farohar?**

The Farohar illustrates the basic elements of Zoroastrian religion. Each part of the Farohar signifies an idea or a philosophy.














1. The male upper body springing out of the central disk represents the human soul or the wisdom of age.
2. The right upper hand extended in a blessing pointing upwards, is a reminder that the path to heaven lies in higher things or that the path of righteousness is the only path to choose.
3. The other hand holds the covenant ring urging Zoroastrians to remember to hold true to their promises. It is like a ring.
4. The ring in the centre symbolizes the eternity of universe or the eternal nature of the soul. As a circle, it has no beginning and no end.
5. Two steamers which extend outward from the central disc illustrate Zoroastrian ethics. They symbolize the two choices humans have between good and evil or that one should proceed towards good and turn away from evil.
6. The three layered wings symbolize ‘Good thoughts, Good words and Good deeds,’ the three fold path of Zoroastrianism.
7. The lower part of the Farohar consists of three parts representing “bad reflection, bad words and bad deeds’ which causes misery and brings misfortune to human beings.

The symbol reached its finest and final form in the rock carvings of Persepolis and it is the Persepolis Farohar which has become not only a graphic symbol of the Zoroastrian faith but also a folk motif. Today the Farohar decorates Zoroastrian temples, it’s made into jewellery, woven into wall hangings, carved into marble and semi-precious stones and even glazed onto ceramic heirlooms.

## **Who are the Amesha Spentas?**

The Amesha Spentas or Ameshaspands assist Ahura Mazda in maintaining the sanctity and purity of Creation. They also serve as the ideals to be emulated and cultivated by humanity. The details on Amesha Spentas are reflected in the chart on the opposite page.

# Amesha Spentas

|   | Name             | Representative quality                       | Earthly Symbol  |
|---|------------------|--|---|
|    | Ahura Mazda      | Wisdom                                       | Man Kind  |
|    | Vohu Manah       | Good Mind.<br>Presides over animal creation. | <br>Cattle   |
|    | Asha Vahishta    | Best Truth.<br>Presides over fire.           | <br>Fire     |
|    | Kshathra Vairyav | Desirable Kingdom.<br>Presides over Metal    | <br>Metal    |
|   | Spenta Aramaiti  | Holy Devotion.<br>Presides over Earth        | <br>Earth   |
|  | Haurvatat        | Wholeness.<br>Presides over Water            | <br>Water  |
|  | Ameretat         | Immortality.<br>Presides over Plants         | <br>Plants |

### **What is the word for “time” in Avestan Language?**

Another word for “time” in the Avestan language is ‘*Zarvan*.’

‘*Zarvan*’ is also the name of a Divine Being who presides over time and was originally instrumental in the formation of creations.

### **What is the word for “time” in Pahlavi language?**

Another word for “time” in Pahlavi and Pazand language is ‘*Gāh*’/ ‘*Geh*,’ which is also used for the five divisions of the day.

### **What is ‘*Hoshbam*’?**

The period of time of about two hours just around sunrise is called ‘*Hoshbām*’. It is not a separate ‘*Geh*.’ It occupies about an hour each of the ‘*Havan*’ and ‘*Ushahin Geh*’. It’s regarded as the best time to offer prayers.

### **Are Heaven (‘*Behesht*’), Hell (‘*Dozakh*’) and ‘*Chinwad*’ bridge (‘*Pul*’) real places?**

According to Zoroastrianism, every human being is mortal, and death is destined for all. Death is the passing away of spiritual elements from the physical body. The soul or ‘*ravan*’ is a spiritual element in all humans which outlives the physical body. In this life, the soul has the choice to be either good or evil, and is responsible for its actions in this life. At the dawn on the fourth day, the soul is judged by Meher, Rashna and Ashtad Yazads.

After the Judgement, the soul crosses over to the spiritual world through the allegorical ‘*Chinwad Pul*’ “the selection bridge.” This bridge symbolises the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds. From here the soul goes either to Heaven or Hell. It may go to ‘*Hamestagān*’ (purgatory) if it’s good and bad actions are equal. If the soul’s actions in life were good, it is easy for the soul to cross the bridge. But if the soul’s actions were wicked, the ‘*Chinwad Bridge*’ becomes narrow and the soul falls into hell. If we believe in our religious texts, than they are a reality, though we may never be able to prove their existence.



## Activity Sheet



**Colour the above picture of the Farohar and fill in the blanks given below:**

1. The male upper body springing out of the central disk represents \_\_\_\_\_
2. Each part of the Farohar signifies a \_\_\_\_\_
3. The male upper body springing out of the central disk represents \_\_\_\_\_
4. The right upper hand reminds us of \_\_\_\_\_
5. The other hand holding the covenant ring urges Zoroastrians to \_\_\_\_\_
6. The ring in the centre symbolizes the \_\_\_\_\_
7. The two steamers which extend outward illustrate \_\_\_\_\_
8. The three layered wings symbolize \_\_\_\_\_
9. The lower three parts represent \_\_\_\_\_
10. The symbol is seen on the \_\_\_\_\_



A model of Zoroastrian Fire Temple (Agiary).

# CHAPTER - 5

## Rituals

### What is the meaning of Rituals?

Rituals mean a formal worship of Ahura Mazda, done through recitation of prayers and enactment of rituals.

### How many types of Rituals are there?

There are two types of rituals – the ‘*Outer*’ and ‘*Inner*’ Rituals.

### Give examples of ‘*Outer*’ Rituals.

They are ‘*Afringan*,’ ‘*Jashan*,’ ‘*Faresta*,’ ‘*Farokhshi*’ and ‘*Stum*’.

- In ‘*Afringan*,’ - the souls of the departed are remembered.
- In ‘*Jashan*,’ - ‘*Ahura Mazda*,’ ‘*Fravashis*,’ ‘*Daham Yazad*’ and ‘*Sarosh Yazad*’ are invoked.
- In ‘*Faresta*’ - 33 Divine Beings, ‘*Ameshapands*’ and ‘*Yazads*’ are invoked.
- ‘*Farokhshi*’ - forms a part of the four days death ceremony.
- ‘*Stum*’ - is a short ritual in which food cooked by a Zarathushti is offered to the ‘*fravashi*’ and souls of the departed ones.

### Give examples of ‘*Inner*’ Rituals.

They are – the ‘*Baj Dharna*,’ the ‘*Yasna*,’ the ‘*Vendidad*’ and the ‘*Nirangdin*’.

- The ‘*Baj*’ ritual is performed by a priest for consecration of sacred bread known as ‘*dron*’ in (Pahlavi) and other edible ritual items during various ceremonies.
- The ‘*Yasna*’ is performed for the benefit of the spiritual beings known as ‘*Yazatas*’.

- The '*Vendidad*' consists of 22 chapters and is performed after midnight in '*Ushahin geh*' mainly for the departed, or consecration of fire temples, tower of silence, '*Martab*' and '*Nirangdin*' rituals.
- The '*Nirangin*' ritual lasts for 18 days in which the urine of '*Varasyaji*' and the other bull are consecrated. This is called '*Nirag*'.

### **Apart from the '*Inner*' and '*Outer*' Rituals are there any other rituals?**

Yes, they are:

*Navjote*, '*Kasti*,' '*Nahan*,' '*Bareshnum*,' '*Navar*,' and '*Maratab*' (for priests,) Wedding and Death.

The '*Geti-kharid*,' '*Hamast*,' '*Shahen Baj*' (are rarely performed).

### **What does '*Purification Ritual*' mean in Zoroastrianism?**

It is a process through which a person ritually cleanses himself in order to be consciously pure in body and soul.

### **What is the '*Padyab Kasti*' Ritual?**

This ritual is the first stage of purification that a Zoroastrian often undergoes in which the person recites '*Khshnaoitra Ahurahe Mazdao*' (Glory be to Ahura Mazda) followed by '*Ashem Vohu*.' Next washes the exposed parts of the body and wipes them. Then recites '*Kem na Mazda*' prayer and ends with '*Ashem Vohu*.' Reties the *Kasti* with '*Ahuramazda Kahodae*' prayer and two '*Ahunavars*' and '*Ashem Vohu*.' Finally recites the '*Fravarane*' commonly known as '*Jasa me avenge Mazda*.' Upon the recitation of this prayer the '*Padyab Kasti*' ritual is complete.

### **Describe the '*Nahan*' Ritual?**

The '*Nahan*' ritual is administered by a priest for purification purposes. It is administered to a child before the Navjote, to the bride and the groom before their wedding, or to a lady after delivery, or whenever a person wishes to undergo a purification ritual for instance after coming home from a hospital after a prolonged illness.

The priest and celebrant do their respective '*Padyab-kastis*.' Three pomegranate leaves are placed in right hand of the celebrant who is made to recite a short prayer known as '*Jamvani Baj*,' which translates to – “we worship Ahura Mazda who is the creator of cattle, corn, waters, plants, light earth that is all good.”

This is followed by three ‘*Ashem Vohus*’ and thereafter the celebrant chews the pomegranate leaves. The leaves are part of plant world and symbolize the principle of immortality (‘*Ameretat*’).

The third part of the ‘*Nahan*’ is ‘*Nirang Pivani Baj*’ and performed thrice. The celebrant is made to recite a short prayer which translates to – “I drink this for holiness of the body and for the purity of the soul.” At the end of the prayer the celebrant is made to sip the ‘*Nirang*’ (a consecrated potion of bull’s urine) the properties of which are deemed to be miraculous. Each sip helps towards internal spiritual catharsis through word and deed and is an important requisite to the ritual purification.

Next the priest and the celebrant recite aloud four ‘*Ashem Vohu*’ prayers and two ‘*Yatha Ahu Vairyos*’ and one more ‘*Ashem Vohu*’ a total of seven invocations likened to seven Amesha Spentas. Finally they recite the ‘*Ahmai Raescha*,’ ‘*Hazanghrem*’ ‘*Jasa me Avanghe Mazda*’ and ‘*Kerfeh Mazd*’ Prayers.

The celebrant is now made to take the ‘*Nahvani baj*,’ (‘*Sarosh Baj*’) till the words ‘*Astavaitish ashaha*.’ The celebrant unties the Kasti, then removes the clothes and takes the important ritual bath. The celebrant rubs a drop or two of the ‘*Taro*’ all over the body. Finally the body is washed cleaned with well water (where possible) completing the process of physical purification. The celebrant emerges from the bathroom after which the remaining portion of ‘*Nahvani Baj*’ is prayed. The celebrant does the Kasti from ‘*Hormazd Khoday*’ and then does the full Kasti from ‘*Kem na Mazda*.’ Then he may recite the ‘*Pashemani*’ prayers which is optional nowadays.

### **What does the Bareshnum ritual mean?**

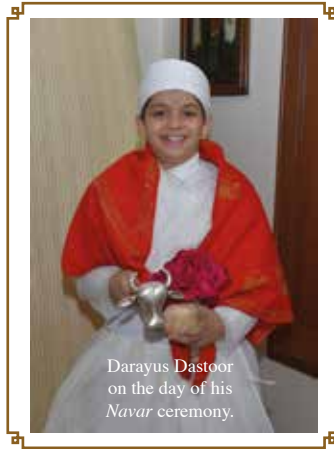
Bareshnum is a purification ritual that nowadays only priests undergo. It’s a ritual bath that is undertaken by priests. The segregation and purification ceremony lasts for nine days and nights during which stringent laws of purity and self-discipline are observed. Technically even a ‘*Behdin*’ can undergo this ritual and many ‘*Behdins*’ have undergone this ritual in the past.

### **How does Bareshnum help the priests?**

The priest will be able to perform the higher *Inner* rituals of the Zoroastrian religion.

### **What is the first step to priesthood?**

The first step to priesthood is becoming a ‘*Navar*.’ The child from the priestly family can become a ‘*Navar*.’



The three stages to becoming a '*Navar*' are – '*Bareshnum*' (nine days purification ritual), the '*Gewra*' (performance of '*Yasna*' ceremony for six days in the name of the person who sponsors the '*Navar*') and '*Navar*' ceremony which is performed in the presence of priest, relatives and invitees.

The child wears the '*Jama*,' '*Pichodi*,' '*Pagdi*,' '*Shawl*' and holds the '*Guraj*' in right hand and coconut in left hand on the day of the '*Navar*' ceremony.

### **What is the meaning of '*Martab*'?**

The term '*Martab*' means exalted. It is the second stage of priesthood. The ceremony is generally performed after a year or two after being a '*Navar*' or later on in life. It entitles the priest to perform inner rituals of '*Yasna*,' '*Visperad*,' '*Vendidad*' and '*Baj*.'

### **Marriage Ceremony**



Zoroastrian Marriage Ceremony being performed by two High Priests  
Vada Dasturji Firoze Kotwal and Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor

## Describe the marriage ritual?

The marriage ritual starts with the '*Nahan*.' The ceremony is performed after sunset. In the beginning the groom and bride sit opposite each other separated by a white cloth referred to as '*Arantar*.' Thereafter the bride and groom do the sacred affirmation before the priest, parents and witnesses. The priest then does the formal '*Ashirwad*' ceremony by giving blessings and admonitions to the marrying couple. There are a number of joyous ceremonies that precede the marriage – the '*Madav Saro*,' '*Adarni*,' '*Supra-ni-reet*,' '*Ukardi-kookardi*' and more.

## What are the main death rituals?

The main death rituals till the '*Chahrom*'(fourth day) are '*Geh sarna*,' '*Sarosh-no-kardo*,' '*Uthamna*.'



The circular well where the dead bodies are placed for 'Sky burial'



The Parsi Cemetery,  
Hong Kong

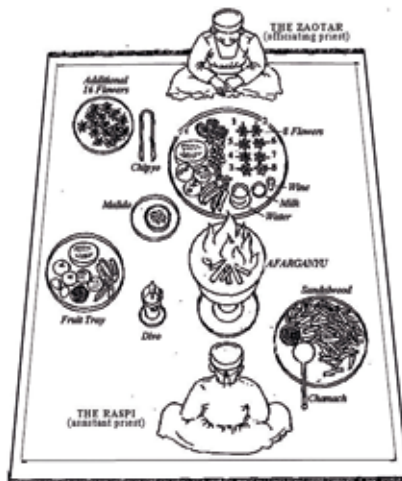


### What is 'Muktad'?

After death, every year, the souls and spirits are invited back for ten days to earth. This festival is known as 'Muktad' in Gujarati. During the 10 'Muktad' days, the 'Stum,' 'Baj,' 'Farokhshi' and 'Afrinagan' ceremonies associated with the soul of the dead are performed. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day the 'Fravashis' return to the spiritual world and the 10<sup>th</sup> day is known as 'Pateti.'

### What is a Jashan ceremony?

A Jashan is a thanksgiving ceremony performed by two or more priests. The officiating priest is known as 'Zaotar' and his assistant is known as 'Raspi.'





### Who are invoked in the Jashan ritual?

The Amesha Spentas or the Bounteous Immortals are invoked in the Jashan. They are the guardians of the creations and symbolically represented by the materials and implements used in the Jashan.

### How many flowers are used in a Jashan ritual?

The arrangement of flowers is in a set of prescribed order. Two vertical rows of four flowers each. The first two flowers are placed vertically with the stalks pointing towards the *Zaotar*, while the remaining six flowers are positioned with their respective stalks pointing sideways. So 24 flowers are used in the ceremony and 16 additional flowers are placed on the right side of the officiating priest.

### Summarize the seven creations in Jashan Ritual.

| Name             | Earthly Symbol               | Representative quality  |
|------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Khshathra Vairya | Sky - the first creation     | Represented by metallic implements                                |
| Haurvatat        | Water – the second creation  | Represented by fresh water in a beaker                            |
| Spenta Armaiti   | Earth – the third creation   | Represented by demarcated area over which the ritual is performed |
| Ameretat         | Plants – the fourth creation | Represented by flowers, fruits and wood offered in the ritual     |
| Vohu Manah       | Cattle – the fifth creation  | Represented by milk in the ritual                                 |
| Ahura Mazda      | Mankind - The sixth creation | Represented by the priests – <i>Zaotar</i> and <i>Raspi</i>       |
| Asha Vahista     | Fire – the seventh creation  | Represented by continuously burning sandalwood on the fire vase   |

## **How is the Jashan ceremony performed?**

The ceremony is performed in the following manner.

- The first step is - the Consecration of the fire by recitation of the '*Atash Niyaesh*' prayer.
- The second is - the '*Dibache*,' which is the remembrance of the souls of the departed who have played an important part in our history, the great kings, heroes, priests etc and finally the departed members of the family sponsoring the Jashan.
- The third is - the '*Afringan*' - the central part of the Jashan in which the spiritual and material worlds are symbolically connected as the flowers are passed from the '*Zoatar*' to the '*Raspi*' and returned back. The '*Afringan*' is repeated three times, one in honour of Ahura Mazda and the other two are in the honour of different Yazatas depending on the occasion.
- Finally, the '*Afrin*' which is invocation of the blessings on the congregation attending the Jashan. At the end of the Jashan ceremony the '*Tandorosti*' prayer is recited for the family sponsoring the Jashan or for the whole congregation if it is a public Jashan.

## **Why do people have Jashans performed in the month of '*Dae*'?**

The Jashan ritual is performed for purposes like invocation, commemoration and thanksgiving. '*Dae*' is the month dedicated to Dadar Ahura Mazda, whom we need to thank for the blessings in our life. This is generally done by the performance of a Jashan in the house. Four days in the month of '*Dae*' are considered auspicious for Jashans. They are '*Hormazd*,' '*Dae-pa-Adar*,' '*Dae-pa-Meher*' and '*Dae-pa-din*.'

## **Is there any religious restriction to put *loban* after Khushalinu Jashan?**

There is no religious restriction on putting '*loban*' on the fire after the Jashan ritual. Instead of putting '*loban*' many do '*Overna*' (showering of rice) once the Khushalinu Jashan is over.

## **Why is a pomegranate necessary in most Zoroastrian rituals?**

As the pomegranate tree is an evergreen tree, it is a symbol of immortality. Therefore, it is mandatory to have any part of the tree of pomegranate, preferably the fruit, in the rituals. Tender leaves of pomegranate are chewed during the '*Nahan*' ritual. Twigs of the tree are pounded along with twigs of '*Haoma*' in the '*Yasna*,' '*Visperad*' and '*Vendidad*' rituals. In the Jashan, '*Afringan*' and '*Farokhshi*' rituals, a slice of pomegranate fruit is invariably kept along with seasonal fruits.

## What is a ‘Boi’ ritual?

The word ‘Boi’ comes from the Avestan word ‘*baodha*.’ In Pahlavi-Pazand it is ‘*Boe*’, both of which mean “fragrance.” The ‘Boi’ ritual is to feed the sacred fire with fragrance and fuel. The ‘Boi’ ritual is performed over consecrated fires of Adaran and Atash Bahram in each of the five watches of the day. In case of the Dadgah fire, the ‘Boi’ ritual is performed at least once a day.

During the performance of the ‘Boi’ ritual in an Atash Bahram, the *hindholā* “stone platform” of the sacred fire, is ceremoniously washed. The ‘*Atash Nyash*’ is recited in varying numbers. At the recital of the first ‘*Nyash*,’ three to nine bells are rung at the words ‘*dushmata*,’ ‘*duzhukhta*’ and ‘*duzhvarshhta*’ - “bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds.” When the ‘Boi’ ritual is performed in an Atash Bahram, the ‘*Māchi*,’ comprising of 6 to 9 pieces of sandalwood, is always offered to the sacred fire. The ‘*Māchi*’ can also be offered to the Adaran or the Dadgah fire at the time of the ‘Boi’ ritual, but that is optional.



The ‘Boi’ ceremony being performed at the Zoroastrian Centre in London by Ervad Marzban H. Dastoor and witnessed by Ervad Zal N. Sethna during the sesquicentennial year of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe.

Picture Courtesy: Malcolm Deboo, President of Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE)

## What is '*Machi*'?

The word '*Māchi*' is derived from the Gujarati word '*Manch*' which means a "seat" or a "platform." In the context of the sacred fire, the platform is the seat or throne of the sacred fire and hence '*Māchi*' means 6 to 9 pieces of sandalwood, about 8 to 10 inches long, arranged in the shape of a throne. It is a gift for the sacred Fire, referred to as the *Pādshāh* (King.)

In Iranshah Atash Bahram '*Māchi*' of nine pieces of sandalwood is used, because it is believed that the fire of lightening used in Atash Bahram was drawn from the ninth level of the '*asmān*' "heavens."

If the '*Machi*' is for happy occasion, the priest recites the '*Tandarosti*' and if it is for a departed one, he recites the '*Patet Ravan-ni*.'

Finally, the priest offers '*Rakhyā*' "sacred ashes" to those present as a mark of their participation in the ritual.



## Activity Sheet

### Fill in the blanks:

1. Name the four '*Outer*' Rituals \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name the three '*Inner*' Rituals \_\_\_\_\_
3. The '*Jashan*' is \_\_\_\_\_ type of ceremony
4. The word '*Afringan*' means \_\_\_\_\_
5. The word '*Faresta*' means \_\_\_\_\_
6. The word Navjote means \_\_\_\_\_
7. The word '*Boi*' comes from the Avesta word \_\_\_\_\_
8. The '*Shahenshahi*' marriage is performed at \_\_\_\_\_
9. The Bareshnum ceremony helps the priest to perform higher \_\_\_\_\_
10. The '*Stum*' is a short ritual in which food is cooked and offered to \_\_\_\_\_

## Purificatory Ritual



### **Sadra**

The Sadra (Sudreh) is a simple white muslin undershirt, with nine seams, worn by Zoroastrians from the day of the Navjote ceremony .



### **The Sacred Cord - Kasti (Kusti)**

The Cord, received through the Navjote ceremony is wound thrice over the Sadra as can be seen in the above image.

# CHAPTER - 6

## Sadra & Kasti

### **Why should I wear Sadra-Kasti?**

Wearing of Sadra-Kasti (Sudreh-Kusti) is a Mazdayasni practice started by King Jamshid, which was accepted later on by Prophet Zarathushtra.

### **How does wearing of Sadra help?**

Sadra acts as a divine armour that protects us from unseen negativities all the time.

### **How does the Kasti help?**

The Kasti makes a boundary around us which protects us from evil. It is imbued with the power of our prayers.

### **What does the Sadra and Kasti remind us of?**

It reminds us of the divine garment and girdle symbolically worn by Divine Beings.

### **What does the Sadra Kasti provide?**

The Sadra and Kasti give us an identity and a sense of security of belonging to a community and religion.

### **What do the 72 strands of Kasti stand for?**

The 72 strand stand for the 72 Chapters of the Yasna.

### **What do the 6 sections (of 12 strands each) stand for?**

They represent the six Amesha Spentas.

### **What do the 12 strands represent?**

They represent the 12 months in a year as well as 12 words of the '*Ashem Vohu*' Prayer.

### **What do the six tassles (3 at each end) represent?**

They represent the six '*Gahambars*' linked to the six Creations of God.

### **What do the 24 strands in each tassel represent?**

They represent the 24 Chapters of the '*Visperad*.'

### **How many seams are there on the Sadra?**

The Sadra which is made from white muslin cloth, has nine seams (Gujarati - *nav saandhaa*). Each seam has a special significance and serves as a road map for leading a good life.

### **What does the '*Gireban*' stand for on a Sadra?**

The '*Gireban*' appears in the front of the Sadra. It is the most important seam. It is a small pocket like pouch with a perforation in the inner side. It is also referred to as '*kisseh-kerfeh*' "the pocket of good deeds." It is symbolic for the goodness and meritorious deeds we have to perform in our lives.

### **What does the '*Girdo*' stand for?**

The '*Girdo*' is the seam on the nape of the neck. It is in the shape of a crescent moon. It is symbolic of a yoke that reminds man of his responsibilities to Ahura Mazda, Prophet Zarathushtra, nation, society, family and above all to one's own self.

There is a misconception that only men's Sadras should have '*Girdo*.' This is incorrect. All Sadras, either for men or women, should have a '*Girdo*.'

### **How many '*Tiris*' are there on our Sadra?**

There are three '*Tiris*' on the Sadra arranged in a particular order. Two angular '*Tiris*' on the right and one parallel '*Tiri*' on the left for Sadras worn by males and vice-versa for Sadras worn by females.

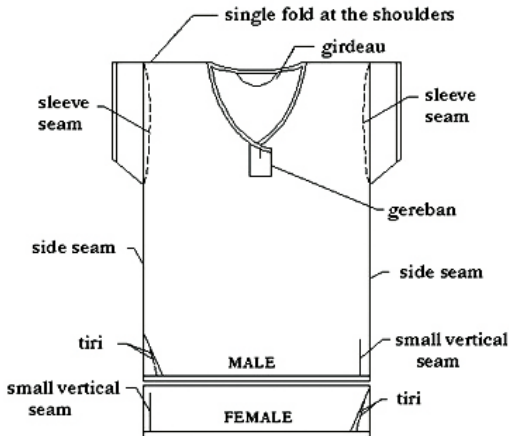
### **What is the significance of the '*Tiris*' on the Sadra?**

The three '*Tiris*' instruct us to live in harmony with and take care of creations. Whereas the two angular *Tiris* remind us to look after the animals and plants kingdoms, the parallel *Tiris* are a reminder to look after the minerals, including metals.

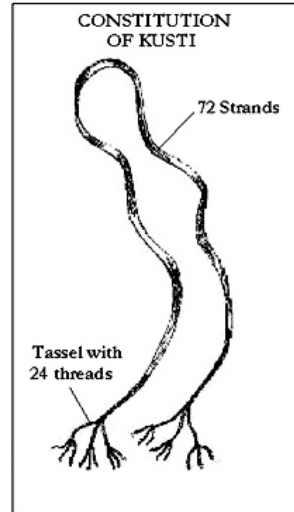


## What does the hollow Kasti represent?

It represents the two worlds – the physical and the spiritual. The diagram below shows the different parts of the Sadra and Kasti.



Courtesy: An "Alat" of Zarathushti Religion  
Sudreh and Kushti - Pervin Mistry  
FEZANA Journal, Winter 1997, USA



## What is the significance of the Kasti ritual?

The Kasti is performed by praying the powerful Avesta and Pazand prayers, compiled from the *Gathas*, the *Yasna* and the *Vendidad*. The prayers give us Divine energy. They cleanse us from negativities picked up from surroundings. We learn the fundamentals of religion of being good, sincere and responsible. It gives us the strength and confidence. If the Kasti is performed with full concentration it benefits the body, mind and spirit.

## Why and how many times should one perform the Kasti?

A Kasti can be performed at different times. It is performed in the morning, at the turn of each 'Geh,' after bath and before going to bed especially to keep us energised.

## At what other times should the Kasti be performed?

The Kasti is generally performed after coming from outside, after coming from the toilet, after visiting places like the 'Dokhma' or cemetery, before going to a sacred place like the fire temple, before doing our daily prayers and before attending rituals.

### **Which direction should one face while doing the Kasti?**

- In the morning (*Havan geh*) face the east
- In the afternoon (*Rapithwin geh*), face south/west
- In the late afternoon (*Uziran geh*) face the west
- After sunset (*Aiwisruthrem* and *Ushahin geh*) face any direction where there is fire/diva/electric lamp. Never face the north.

### **What is the significance of ‘Char Dishano Namaskar’ prayer?**

This is a special prayer in which we pay homage to all creations by turning on all four sides, including the north. We are enjoined to recite this prayer daily along with our ‘*Farazyat*’ (obligatory) prayers. In this very short prayer we pay respect to the sky, the lands, the fields, waters, earth, plants, winds, stars, moon, the sun all the heavenly bodies and Divine Beings.

### **Why do we not face the north direction while praying?**

There are two main reasons why we do not face the north while doing our Kasti:

- In Avesta texts the north side is considered evil as ‘*Angra Mainyu*,’ the evil spirit, is said to reside there.
- All types of evils collect in the north and emanate from there.

### **Can we make a knot at the centre of a Kasti if it is long?**

A Kasti is generally bought according to one’s size. If it is a bit bigger it will shrink over a period of time with regular washing. The length of the Kasti is measured in *Gaj*. One *Gaj* is approximately equal to 27 inches. Depending on the size of ones’ waist, one should calculate the length of the Kasti leaving an extra about 10 inches for the looseness around waist, knots and *laris*. Hence if the waist of a child is 28, the Kasti should be  $28 \times 3 + 10 \div 27 = 3.5$  *Gaj*.

**Activity Sheet**



Name the different parts of the Sadra (Sudreh) and Kasti (Kusti)

# Navjote



Family Members and the Priest accompanying the Navjotee to the stage for performance of the Navjote ceremony



Navjote Ceremony being performed by Zoroastrian Priests

# CHAPTER - 7

## Navjote

### What does the word Navjote mean?

The word Navjote means “a new offeror of prayers.” On this day, the child gets the gift of Sadra-Kasti (Sudreh-Kusti) and with it the responsibility of offering prayers.

### What does the child affirm on Navjote?

With the ‘*Din no Karmo*’ prayer, and tying of knots of the Kasti the child affirms four Truths:

1. Ahura Mazda is my God.
2. Zarathushtra is my Prophet.
3. Mazdayasni Zarthoshti is my religion.
4. I will be faithful to Ahura Mazda, Prophet Zarathushtra and my religion all my life.

### How does the Navjote ceremony start?

It starts with the ‘*Nahan*’ a purificatory bath in the presence of a priest. The child sips the ‘*Nirang*’, chews pomegranate leaves and takes bath after applying a few drops of ‘*Taro*’ (bull’s urine) on his body. The ‘*Nahan*’ cleanses the body, mind and soul and prepares the child for the Navjote and the new religious life.



Navjote ceremony of Shayan Jubin Khansaheb, being performed by Vada Dasturji Cyrus N. Dastur on 9th November, 2019, in Surat.

## How is the whole Navjote ceremony performed?

- Firstly the child undergoes the '*Nahan*' ceremony with the help of a priest.
- The child is then accompanied by the priest to the stage.
- The family members walk behind the priest and the child holding the Navjote Ses which has new clothes and other items.
- The child is made to sit on a low wooden stool (*patlo*) placed on the stage.
- Opposite him sits the officiating priest with two or four other priests. The Sadra (Sudreh), stitched by hand is placed in the child's hand.
- The priest then recites the '*Patet Pashemani*' up to the word '*geti minoani*' and upon the words '*okhe awakshsh*' the other priests join in and recite the remaining '*Patet*' prayer.
- During this period the child prays '*Ahunaver.*' The officiating priest and child both stand on stage.
- The Sadra is placed in child's hand which is held by the priest in order to maintain the ritual connection known as '*Paiwand.*'
- The priest and child both chant '*Din no Kalmo.*'
- The priest and child recite one '*Ahunavar*' and on the word '*Shyaothananam*' the priest makes the child wear the Sadra.
- The priest stands behind the child and holds the mid-point of the Kasti (Kusti) in his left hand and remaining length of the cord passes between the thumb and index finger of the right hand with the two ends of the Kasti hanging down loosely.
- The priest recites aloud the preliminary portion of the Ohrmazd Yasht followed by small '*Khshnuman*' of Ohrmazd. Then the priest and child recite '*Ahuramazda Khodae.*' Upon the words '*manashni, gavashni, kunashni*' the priest holds the Kasti together with the child and makes two loops which are interconnected, reminding us that the two worlds - the physical and the spiritual are dependent on each other.
- Upon the words '*Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao,*' the priest encircles the Kasti twice around the child's waist and completes the '*Ahuramazda Khodai*' prayer.

- The priest and child recite two ‘*Yatha Ahu Vairiyos*’ and tie the front reef knot. Then the priest encircles the Kasti once more around the child’s waist and makes a reef knot at the back reciting the ‘*Ashem Vohu*’ Prayer.
- The knot in front reminds of Ohrmazd while reef knot at the back reminds of Zarathushtra. The child recites the ‘*Fravarane*’ in unison with the priest. Thenceforth the child is spiritually responsible for all thoughts words and deeds.
- Both the officiating priest and child sit down. The officiating priest thereafter stands up and starts reciting the ‘*Doa Tan Dorosti*’ Prayer and showers grains of rice upon the child’s head as a symbolic gesture to ensure prosperity and plenty in life of the newly initiated Zoroastrian.
- The other priests then recite aloud the ‘*Doa Tan Darosti*’ prayer for the well being of the child’s parents. At the end the priests are given monetary gift as a token of appreciation for their services.
- The members of the family shower the child with rice and make the child wear the new clothes for the Navjote.

### **What are the responsibilities of the child from the day of the Navjote?**

The child becomes responsible for all his/her actions and starts collecting merits for the good deeds and retributions for the bad deeds.



Navjote Vaga with embroidered shawl, lenga, topi and sapat for boys and girls

# Prayer Book





# CHAPTER - 8

## Prayers

### **Why should we pray?**

Prayers are the best way to communicate with Ahura Mazda, Prophet Zarathushtra and the Divine Beings. It is a way to obtain divine energy, which is necessary for one's overall well-being.

### **Which are the three ancient prayers in Zoroastrianism?**

The three ancient prayers are - '*Yatha Ahu Variyo*,' '*Ashem Vohu*' and '*Yenghe Hatam*.'

### **How should a Zoroastrian begin his prayers?**

According to Zoroastrian tradition the prayers for personal work should begin by remembering Ahura Mazda. That is why Zoroastrian prayers begin with the words '*Khshnao th |ra ahurahe mazdāo*' - "for the happiness of Ahura Mazda," '*Ba nāme yazad*' - "in the name of *Yazad*."

### **How many '*Ashem Vohu*' prayers should one recite for wishes to be granted?**

- One '*Ashem*' after completion of any work or prayer
- Three '*Ashems*' before a declaration or affirmation

### **Can '*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*' and '*Ashem Vohu*' be recited without covering the head?**

Yes. They can be recited without covering the head even when one is travelling, swimming or in the hospital.

### **How many sets of *Yatha Ahu Vairyos* and *Ashem Vohus* should one recite?**

- Two '*Yathas*' and one '*Ashem*.'
- Five '*Yathas*' and three '*Ashems*.'
- Twenty One '*Yathas*' and 12 '*Ashems*.'

The image shows a page from a manuscript with a highly decorative border. The border is filled with intricate floral and foliate patterns in shades of blue, green, and gold. In the center, there is a scroll with a gold, textured surface, held by two blue, column-like supports. The scroll is set against a deep red background. The text on the scroll is centered and reads:

**Meaning of  
Ashem Vohu Prayer**

Truth is the highest good.

True happiness comes to those  
who follow truth for its own  
sake without thought of reward  
or punishment.

Truth is the highest good.

True happiness comes to those  
who follow truth for its own  
sake without thought of reward  
or punishment.


The image shows a page from a manuscript with a highly decorative border. The border is filled with intricate floral and foliate patterns in shades of blue, green, and gold. In the center, there is a red background with a white scroll. The scroll is held by two golden rods. The text on the scroll is centered and reads:

### Meaning Of Yatha Ahu Vairyo Prayer

Just as the King is all  
powerful among man, so  
is the holy person because  
of his righteousness.

The blessings of the Good  
mind will come to those  
who dedicate their life's  
actions to Mazda.

Those who help the poor  
and needy give power to  
Ahura.



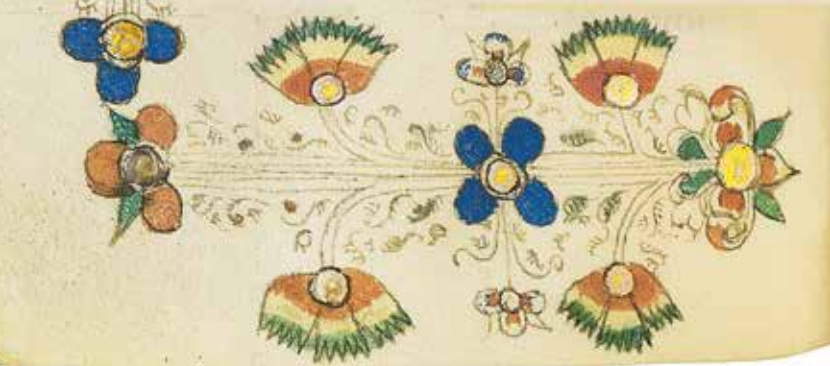
## Meaning Of Kemna Mazda Prayer

When wicked people threaten me with harm, which man shall give protection to me and my followers except thy Divine energy and consciousness? By the actions of which two powers will the Truth be accomplished Oh! Ahura Mazda? Do reveal that knowledge for strengthening my religion/faith.

Which are your words for protection to smite the enemy? Do clearly reveal to me a divine teacher who can lead me to wisdom of both the worlds, so that to him 'Sarosh' (Divine guidance) can come through 'Vohu Manah' (higher consciousness). Oh! Mazda, May your Divine voice come to him, to anyone, to whomsoever you wish that is considered deserving.

Oh! Mazda and Spenta Armaiti, protect us against harm. Flee Oh! evil druj. Flee Oh! origin of evil. Flee Oh! acts initiated by evil. Flee Oh! acts increased by evil. Flee away Oh! druj. Run away Oh! druj. Flee far away Oh! druj. Flee away to the north. Do not make the corporeal worlds of the righteous worthy of destruction.

Homage unto Armaiti who is giver of prosperity.



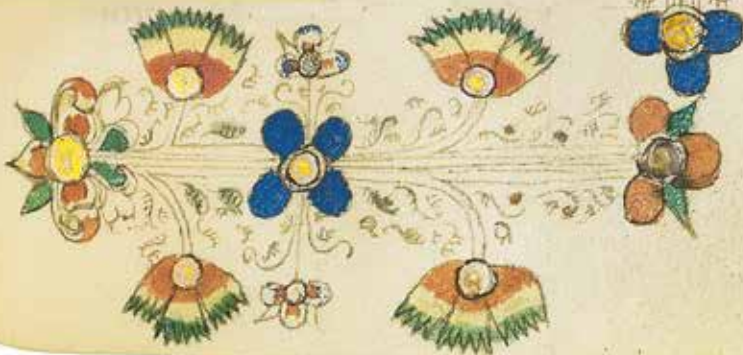


## Meaning Of Ahura Mazda Khodai Prayer

Hormazd is the Lord. Ahreman should not be followed and should be kept back, away, smitten and defeated. Ahreman, demons, liars, sorcerers, wicked ones, evil priests, evil rulers, oppressors, sinners, heretics, wicked ones, enemies and witches should be smitten and defeated.

Evil rulers should be made powerless. Enemies should be defeated. Enemies should be made powerless.

Hormazd is my God. I repent and atone for all my sins, for all bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds. Sins in the world which I may have contemplated, I may have spoken, I may have done, I may have initiated, or which may have originated from me. For all those sins of thoughts, words and actions related to the body or to the soul to the material world or spiritual world. I restrain from and repent with threefold words for the sins. For this, I am atoning. I pray for the happiness of Ahura Mazda and for defeat of Ahreman. May the wishes of those who are truthful be fulfilled first. I praise the Truth.



The image shows a page from a manuscript, likely a prayer book. The page is framed by a wide, ornate border of floral and foliate designs in blue, green, and gold. In the center, a scroll is unrolled, revealing text. The scroll is held by two golden rods. The background behind the scroll is a deep red. The text is centered and reads:

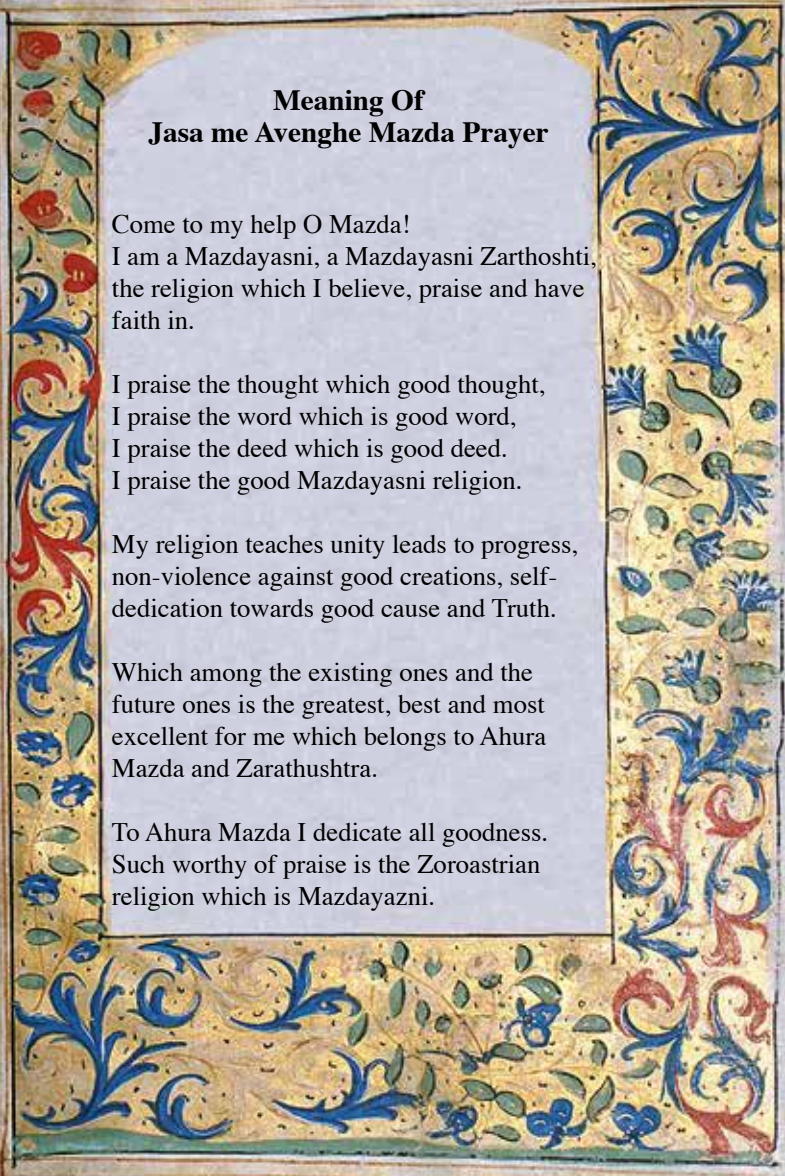
**Meaning Of  
Yenghe Hatam Prayer**

We adore and try to be like those  
men and women among us whose  
acts of worship are righteousness.  
These are the men and women  
who  
Ahura Mazda regards as the  
noblest of mortals.

The page is framed by a wide, intricate border of floral and foliate motifs in blue, green, and gold. In the center, a scroll is unrolled, showing text. The scroll is held by two golden rollers. The background behind the scroll is a deep red archway supported by two blue columns. The text is centered on the scroll.

## Meaning Of Ahmai Raeshcha Prayer

May these blessings come to people with Divine intelligence and Divine energy, healthy and active body. Body having immunity, prosperity resulting in complete happiness. Children with innate intelligence, long life, bright happy, best existence and heaven for the righteous people.



## Meaning Of Jasa me Avenge Mazda Prayer

Come to my help O Mazda!  
I am a Mazdayasni, a Mazdayasni Zarthoshti,  
the religion which I believe, praise and have  
faith in.

I praise the thought which good thought,  
I praise the word which is good word,  
I praise the deed which is good deed.  
I praise the good Mazdayasni religion.

My religion teaches unity leads to progress,  
non-violence against good creations, self-  
dedication towards good cause and Truth.

Which among the existing ones and the  
future ones is the greatest, best and most  
excellent for me which belongs to Ahura  
Mazda and Zarathushtra.

To Ahura Mazda I dedicate all goodness.  
Such worthy of praise is the Zoroastrian  
religion which is Mazdayasni.





## Meaning Of Din no Karmo Prayer

In the name of God who is merciful, forgiving and kind, we revere the righteous, good Mazdayasni religion which is most proper, grants wisdom and is created by Ahura.

This is the good, truthful and proper religion which God has sent for the world.

This is the religion which Prophet Zarathushtra has brought.

This is the religion of Zarathushtra, religion of Ahura Mazda brought by Zarathushtra Spitaman.

## Meaning Of Doa Tandarosti Prayer

In the name of Ahura Mazda who is merciful, forgiving and kind. Health is necessary for a long life. Divine energy and righteousness are required for good health. May my illuminated offerings reach all – Yazads of the spiritual world, Yazads of the material world and seven Ameshaspands. May this wish be accepted, may this desire be accepted.

May the Zarathushti religion spread happiness among all men. May it be so! O Creator God! O God of the world! For the entire assembly and for so and so (to take the names of self and family here) grant longevity, grant happiness, grant health, grant them this with their children for a thousand years. Keep permanent and long standing goodness, lasting many years, for a very long time for leadership of worthy people.

May there be thousand fold blessings on us. May the years be auspicious, may the days be prosperous, and may the months be happy. For many years, many days and many months for several years for performing rituals, doing prayers and charity and carrying offerings.

May we righteously perform all works and meritorious deeds! May we be healthy, may we be happy and may we be fine. May it be so! May it ever be so! May our desires be fulfilled through the blessings of Yazads and Ameshaspands.

## **What is the concept of five ‘Gehs’ in Zoroastrian religion?**

The concept of five ‘Gehs’ very important in Zoroastrianism. The day is divided into five parts called the five *Gehs* which are - *Havan*, *Rapithwin*, *Uziran*, *Aiwisruthrem* and *Ushahin*. The names of the five *Gehs* are originally from the Avesta language.

### **What does each *Geh* mean?**

1. *Havan* means - “time of pounding Haoma”
2. *Rapithwin* means - “half part of the day”
3. *Uziran* means - “high part of the day”
4. *Aiwisruthrem* means - “time for singing prayers”
5. *Ushahin* means - “enhancing consciousness.” The name of the *Geh* is not only the name of that part of the day but also the name of a Yazad who presides over that period.

### **How many ‘Yatha Ahu Vairyos’ should one recite for wishes to be granted?**

- One for protection
- Two for seeking blessings
- Four for venerating nature
- Five for invoking Sarosh Yazad
- Seven for invoking Yazads and Ameshaspands
- Eight for invoking Fravashis and
- Ten for invoking Ahura Mazda.

### **What is the significance of ‘Yenghe Hatam’ prayer?**

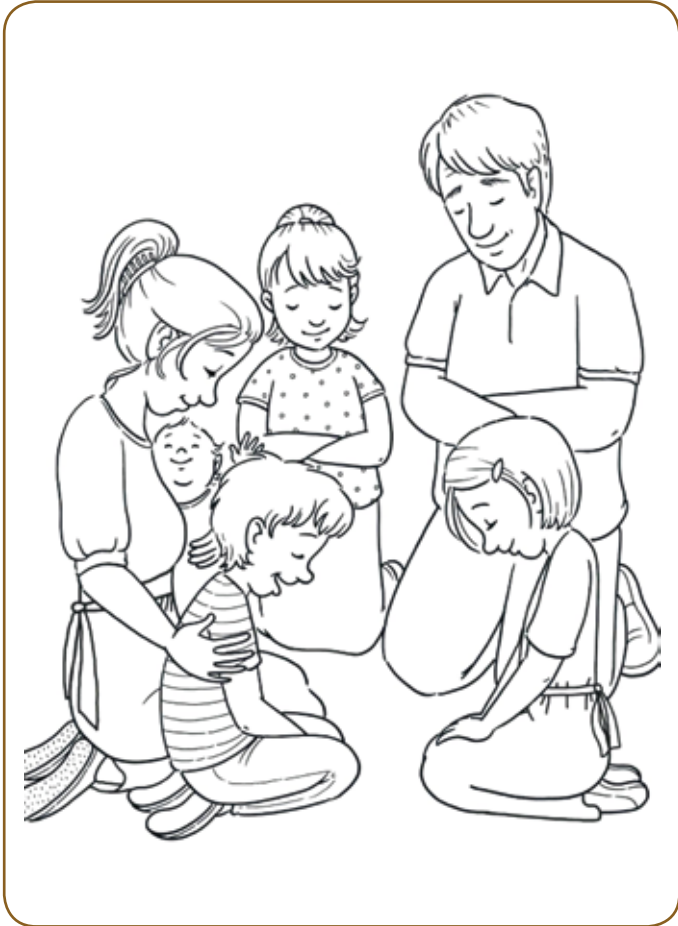
It is a prayer seeking harmony with righteous people. Reciting it regularly makes our prayers, wishes and desires more effective.

### **Why is ‘Ahmai Raeshcha,’ ‘Hazanghrem,’ ‘Jasa me Avanghe’ and ‘Kerfeh Mazd’ recited in every prayer?**

These four short prayers form a part of all larger prayers.

- ‘Ahmai Raeshcha’ is for invoking blessings for divine energy, health, wealth, progeny, long life etc.

- ‘*Hazanghrem*’ is for invoking blessings for complete health.
- ‘*Jasa me Avanghe Mazda*’ is to ask for help from Ahura Mazda, Behram Yazad, Ram Yazad, and other Divine Beings.
- ‘*Kerfeh Mazd*’ is an affirmation to perform good deeds and to keep away from sins.



Smiling faces of every member in the family is the signature of god’s presence. Colour this picture as brightly as you can of the family praying together.



## Activity Sheet

In Zoroastrianism, the day is divided into five periods called *Gehs*.

The five '*Gehs*' are:

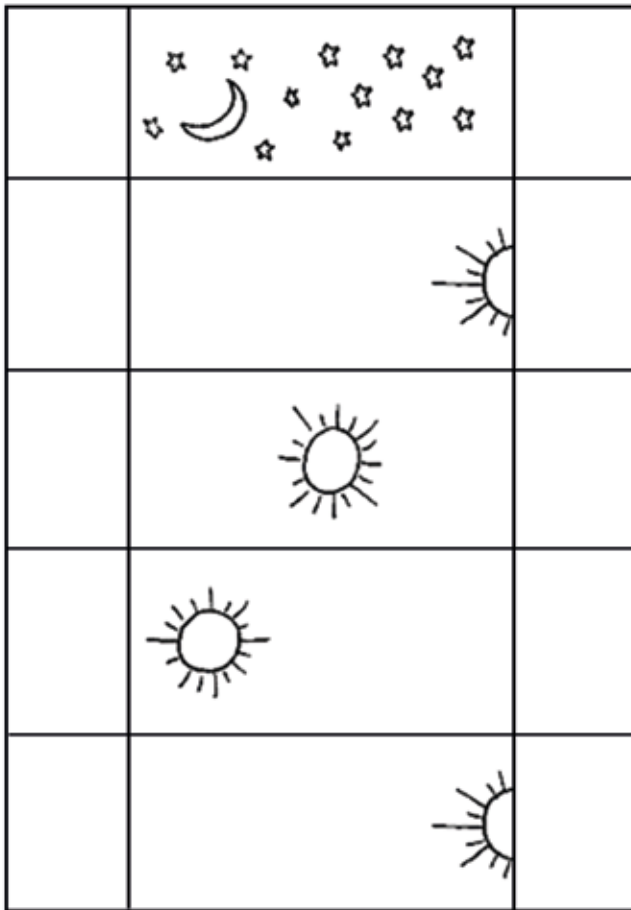
**HAVAN GEH:** Sunrise to 12.30 p.m.

**RAPITHVAN GEH:** 12.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

**UZIRAN GEH:** 3.30 p.m. to Sunset.

**AIWISRUTHREM GEH:** Sunset to 12.30 a.m.

**USHAHEN GEH:** 12.30 a.m. to Sunrise



Colour this picture and insert the names of different '*Gehs*' in the last column.



**Shahenshahi  
Calendar**

# CHAPTER - 9

## Shahenshahi Calendar

### How many days are there in a month in the Shahenshahi Calendar?

There are 30 days in a month in the Shahenshahi Calendar. In addition, there are five days known as '*Gatha*' days which fall after the 12<sup>th</sup> months and before the New year.

### To whom is each *Roj* (day) dedicated in the Calendar?

Each *Roj* (day) is dedicated to either an Ameshaspand, Yazad, Mino or Asho Farohar.

### What does the Avesta term Yazatas/Yazds mean?

It means "an adorable being worthy of worship." They form the second tier of divinities whose origin stem from a pre-Zoroastrian background. They aid the well-being of all the seven good creations and help man to realise the inherent nature of God. They are givers of boons, when invoked by man.

### Name the 30 days of the month in Shahenshahi Calendar.

| No | Names       | Titles      | What they stand for                              |
|----|-------------|-------------|--|
| 1  | Hormazd     | Dadar       | The Creator.                                     |
| 2  | Bahman      | Ameshaspand | The divine consciousness, the Good Mind, cattle. |
| 3  | Ardibahesht | Ameshaspand | The Divine Order, Truth, Fire.                   |
| 4  | Shahrevar   | Ameshaspand | Strength, hard work, the sky, metals.            |
| 5  | Aspandad    | Ameshaspand | Love, tolerance, the earth.                      |
| 6  | Khordad     | Ameshaspand | Perfection, water.                               |
| 7  | Amardad     | Ameshaspand | Immortality, plants.                             |

|    |             |                |  |
|----|-------------|----------------|--|
| 8  | Daepadar    | Dadar          | The Creator.   |
| 9  | Adar        | Yazad          | Fire.  |
| 10 | Avan        | Ardivisur Banu | Water, fluids.   |
| 11 | Khorshed    | Yazad          | Intelligence, sun.   |
| 12 | Mohor       | Yazad          | Mind, moon.  |
| 13 | Tir         | Teshtar Yazad  | Star, rains, eyes.   |
| 14 | Gosh        | Yazad          | Earth.   |
| 15 | Daepameher  | Dadar          | The creator.   |
| 16 | Meher       | Yazad          | Cosmic lights, justice, promise.                             |
| 17 | Sarosh      | Yazad          | Prayers, soul, guardian at night.                            |
| 18 | Rashne      | Yazad          | Judge of the soul, justice.                                  |
| 19 | Farvardin   | Farrokh        | Guardian angels of humans and creators.                      |
| 20 | Behram      | Yazad          | Success, victory.  |
| 21 | Ram         | Mino           | Joy of life, space, spheres.                                 |
| 22 | Govad       | Yazad          | Wind, health.  |
| 23 | Daepadin    | Dadar          | The creator.   |
| 24 | Din         | Yazad          | Religion.  |
| 25 | Ashishwangh | Mino           | Wealth, spiritual and material.                              |
| 26 | Ashtad      | Yazad          | Judge of the soul, truth.                                    |
| 27 | Asman       | Mino           | Stations between physical and spiritual worlds.              |
| 28 | Zamyad      | Yazad          | The earth, the mountains.                                    |
| 29 | Marespand   | Mino           | Mantra (words of prayers), all benefits of reciting manthra. |
| 30 | Aneran      | Mino           | Endless light, the ultimate spiritual existence.             |



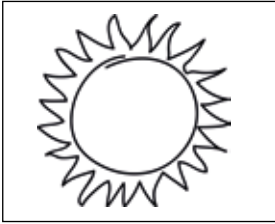
## **What are the names of 12 Months according to ‘Shahenshahi’ calendar?**

The 12 months in the Shahenshahi calendar are dedicated to the more important Divine Beings from the 30 Divine Beings presiding over the *Roj*.

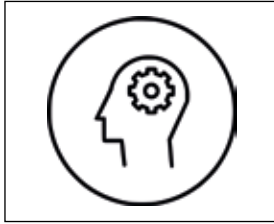
The names of 12 months are given below:

- Farvardin (Asho Farohar)
- Ardibahesht (Ameshaspand)
- Khordad (Ameshaspand)
- Tir (Yazad)
- Amardad (Ameshaspand)
- Shahrevar (Ameshaspand)
- Meher (Yazad)
- Avan (Yazad)
- Adar (Yazad)
- Dae (Dadar)
- Bahman (Ameshaspand)
- Aspandad (Ameshaspand)

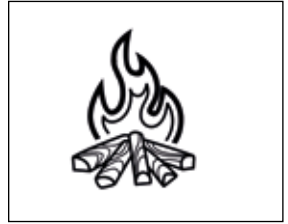
Colour the 30 Days of the month according to  
Shahenshahi Calendar



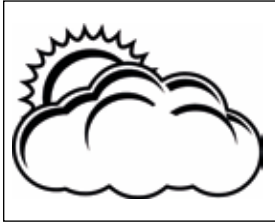
Hormazd



Bahman



Ardibahesht



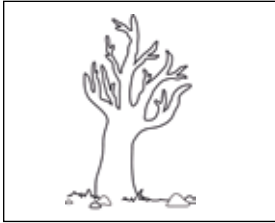
Shahrevar



Aspandad



Khordad



Amardad



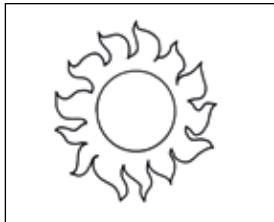
Daepadar



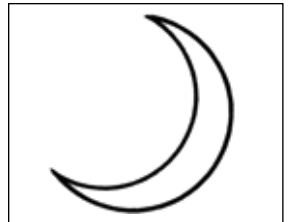
Adar



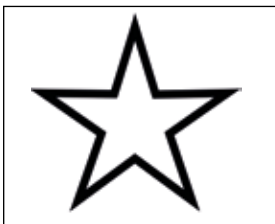
Avan



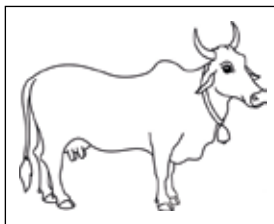
Khorshed



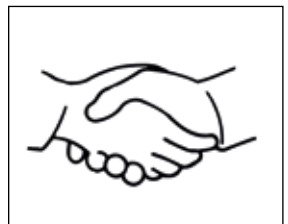
Mohor



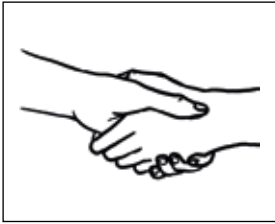
Tir



Gosh



Daepameher



Meher



Sarosh



Rashne



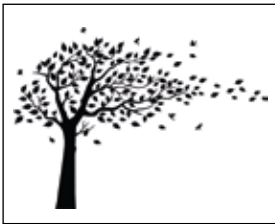
Farvardin



Behram



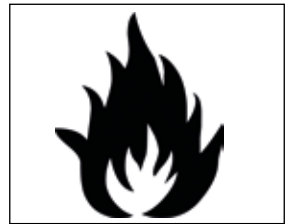
Ram



Govad



Daepadin



Din



Ashishwangh



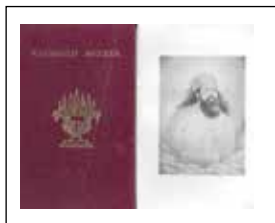
Ashtad



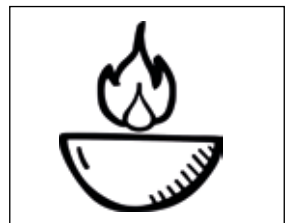
Asman



Zamyad



Marespand



Aneran



The Majestic Entrance Gate to Udvada.

# CHAPTER - 10

## Journey of the Eternal Flame

### From Iran to India

#### **When and why did the Zoroastrians leave the town of Hormuzd in Iran?**

The Zoroastrians before coming to India, sojourned in the mountains of Khorasan for a hundred years and then travelled to Hormuz and undertook a voyage by sea to Diu. The traditional account does not provide an exact date for the journey of the Zoroastrians and there is a debate over the exact year of their exodus and settlement ranging from 716 C.E to 936 C.E. The reason for the exodus leaving Iran lies in their loss of political and social power and invidious minority status in Islamic society.

#### **When did the Zoroastrians arrive in Diu?**

According to tradition they landed in Diu around 697 C.E. and stayed there for almost 19 years. But the stifling heat and barren soil forced them to set sail once again towards the western coast of mainland India.

#### **What happened as they set sail towards the western coast?**

When they set sail towards the western coast they were battered by a terrible storm. Huddled in their little boats, the Zoroastrians prayed fervently to Ahura Mazda and promised to build an Atash Bahram, if they were saved. Fortunately, their prayers were heard, the storm settled, and they landed safely on dry land in around 716 C.E. in Sanjan.

#### **Who welcomed them in Sanjan?**

Legend has it that the new settlers were met by the Emissary of the Hindu King Jadi Rana, who set five conditions before giving them shelter. The Zoroastrians agreed to the five conditions being - to forsake their weapons, become peaceable subjects, adopt the local language, dress and observe the performance of marriage ceremonies after sunset. For centuries thereafter they have kept their promise and mingled peacefully with the local population like sugar in milk.

#### **How did the generous hosts of Gujarat address the new settlers?**

The local people addressed them as 'Parsis' or the people from the Land of Pars.

### **What did the Parsis do after settling down in Sanjan?**

They adapted to the local customs and eventually consecrated their Holy Fire Iranshah, drawn from sixteen sources, in 720 C.E. in their new homeland.

### **In Zoroastrianism what does “Fire” stand for?**

“Fire” is a symbol of God’s Divine light and Zoroastrians bow in reverence to the Holy flame.

### **For how many years did Iranshah remain in Sanjan?**

Iranshah remained in Sanjan for 669 years until political events took a turn in 1297 C.E., when the Muslim ruler, Sultan Mahmud, invaded Gujarat and occupied the Sanjan area.

### **What did the Parsis do thereafter?**

After the occupation of Sanjan, the Parsis took shelter in the Bahrot Caves and kept the sacred fire there for 13 years.

### **What happened after Bahrot?**

When the safety conditions improved, the Sanjana priests shifted, the holy fire, to another village known as Bansda (Vasda) where it remained for 14 years. During this period, one of the pilgrims, Changashah, also known as Changa Asa, of Navsari who was a benefactor, used to travel to Bansda. He persuaded the priests to move to Navsari.

### **When did the Holy Fire move to Navsari?**

In 1419, the holy fire was moved to Navsari, where it stayed for 321 years, (1419 to 1740) except for three years (1733 to 1736) when it was taken to Surat on account of the attack of the Pindharas the nomadic robbers. When the situation eased the Holy fire was brought back to Navsari.

### **When did the Holy Fire move to Bulsar?**

The Sanjana priests and the Bhagarias (local priests) of Navsari had a working arrangement to run the sacred fire temple, but this understanding broke down and legal issues ensued. Disturbed by this development, the Sanjana priests moved out of Navsari with their sacred fire and in 1740 and housed the fire in one of the two agiaries (the first level of fire temples) in Bulsar (also known as Valsad).

## **When did the Holy fire move to Udvada?**

Even in Bulsar the Sanjana priests could not come to amicable terms with the local priests of the ‘Agiary’ and they decided to move to Udvada. The Holy fire was brought to Udvada in 1472, and for a number of years the Holy fire was kept in a private house, until it was shifted to the new building of the ‘Atash Bahram.’

## **Why is the Udvada Atash Bahram known as the Iranshah?**

The Udvada Atash Bahram is known as the Iranshah, “King of Iran” which is a symbolic representation of the Zoroastrian Monarchy of Iran.

## **Who built the Atash Bahram in Udvada?**

The architect and builder of the temple was Dinshaw Dorabjee Mistry from Mumbai. The existing fire temple was built with the charitable support of Dadabhoy Pestonjee Wadia in 1829. It was refurbished by Lady Motlibhai Wadia in 1894.

## **How many families of priests are there?**

There are nine families of priests who were descendants of the three priests who had retrieved the sacred fire from Sanjan to safety. The presiding High Priest or Dastur of the Atash Bahram belongs to either the Mirza or the Dastur families which are two of the nine families.



The entrance gate to Pak Iranshah at Udvada - an edifice of beauty, peace, spirituality and harmony.

## **Name the different celebrations that take place at Iranshah?**

The anniversary known as ‘*Sālgiri*’ is celebrated every year according to the Shahenshahi Zoroastrian calendar on ‘*Ādar Mahino*’ (Month) and ‘*Ādar Roj*’ (Day).

Apart from the ‘*Salgiri*,’ the other religious observance held every month is the ‘*Bahrām Roj*’ (the twentieth day of the month) and the ‘Parsi New Year,’ in August each year.

On festive occasions, Udvada comes to life with large number of pilgrims buying sandalwood, flowers and other religious paraphernalia to offer to the Holy fire.

## **What can one see in Udvada?**

Udvada is a coastal town located 200 km north of Mumbai. Udvada means the “*grazing ground of camels*” before it became a fishing village. It is the most sacred town for Zoroastrians all over the world as the highest grade of fire is housed in Udvada Atash Behram. The Information Centre is a treasure trove of intriguing artefacts. The houses have unique architecture. Delicious Parsi food is available in the hotels and restaurants. The place comes alive when large number of devotees visit the town to pay homage to Pak Iranshah. But the most important thing is the warmth of the people.



The painting depicts the arrival of Zoroastrians from Iran to India. The migrants first landed on the island of Diu (Gujarat) and thereafter moved to Sanjan.



## Chart depicting the journey of the Eternal Fire in India.





Old houses of Zoroastrians in Udvada village.

## Activity Sheet

### Fill in the blanks:

The Holy fire stayed in Sanjan for the period \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Thereafter the Holy fire shifted to \_\_\_\_\_

The Holy fire stayed in Bansda for the period \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

In 1419, the Holy fire shifted to \_\_\_\_\_

The Holy fire shifted to Surat because of the attack of the \_\_\_\_\_ and stayed there for the period \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

The Holy fire stayed in Bulsar (Valsad) for \_\_\_\_\_ years

Finally the Holy fire shifted to Udvada in the year \_\_\_\_\_



THE HOLY  
FIRES

# CHAPTER - 11

## Fire and Fire Temples

### **Which are the three principle grades of Fire in Zoroastrianism?**

They are - Atash Bahram/Behram, Atash Adaran and Atash Dadgah.

### **How many Atash Bahrams are there in the world?**

There are 8 Atash Bahrams in India and one in Yazd, Iran. The oldest Atash Bahram is in Udvada, Gujarat, India. The Zoroastrians from all over the world visit this Atash Bahram regularly.

### **Why are the statues of ‘Godhās’ - “the winged bull” placed at the entrance of fire temples?**

A ‘Godhā’ “winged bull” is the Zoroastrian symbol of ‘gāvyodād,’ the first created animal, and hence also of Bahman Ameshāspand, who looks after animals. As Bahman Ameshāspand presides over the mind, the winged bull is also a symbol for the mind and stands for three levels of the mind:

- The animal body represents the elementary and involuntary functions controlled by the sub-conscious mind.
- The human face corresponds to the humane and ethical functions which are managed by the conscious mind.
- The wings indicate the potential Divine and evolutionary levels of the mind, controlled by the highest level of the mind.

### **Why do we apply ‘Rakhyā’?**

The word ‘Rakhyā’ comes from the Gujarati word ‘Rākh’ which means “ash.” We apply Rakhyā as it is the sacred ash from the consecrated fires.

### **Where should the ‘Rakhyā’ be applied?**

A few grains of ‘Rakhyā’ taken on a finger-tip in the Fire Temple has to be reverently applied on the forehead, the place symbolic of wisdom and divinity. It is believed that the sacred ash applied on this spiritual centre helps towards spiritual evolution. The ‘Rakhyā’ should be rubbed off before leaving the fire temple premises. Some people apply ‘Rakhyā’ on other parts of the body, which is a wrong practice.

## Locations of 'Atash Bahrams' worldwide



CE 1742  
IRANSHAH ATASH BAHRAM  
UDVADA

CE 1765  
BHAGARSATH ANJUMAN ATASH  
BAHRAM - NAVSARI



CE 1783  
DADISETH ATASH BAHRAM -  
MUMBAI

CE 1823  
VAKIL ATASH BAHRAM - SURAT





CE 1823  
MODI ATASH BAHRAM- SURAT



CE 1830  
WADIAJI ATASH BAHRAM  
MUMBAI



CE 1845  
BANAJI ATASH BAHRAM MUMBAI



CE 1897  
ANJUMAN ATASH BAHRAM  
MUMBAI



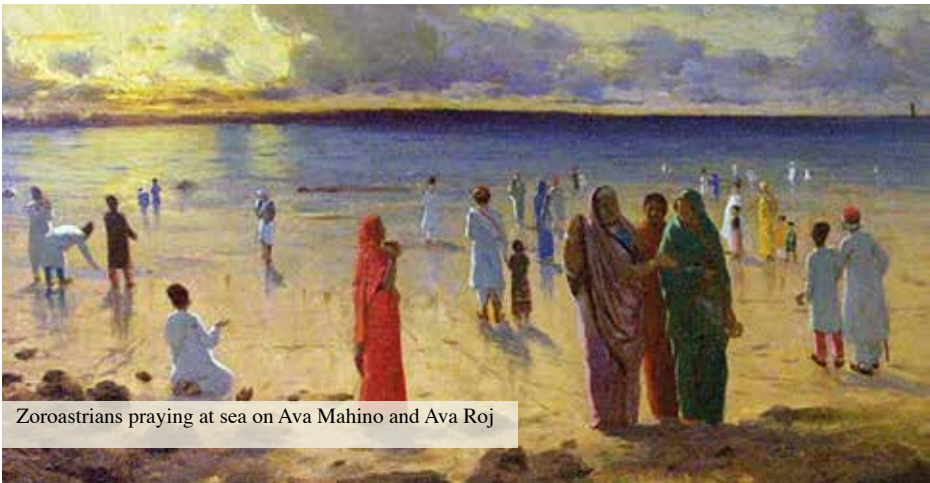
CE 1932  
ATASH BAHRAM - YAZD



Haft-Sin table on Navroz festival



Sadeh celebration



Zoroastrians praying at sea on Ava Mahino and Ava Roj



# CHAPTER - 12

## Festivals

**Pateti** – The day for repentance. It falls on the last day of the Zoroastrian calendar year.

**Farvardegan/Muktad** – The days of remembering all guardian spirits.

**Jamshedi Navroz** – The festival of spring on 21st March.

**Khordad Sal** – Prophet Zarathushtra's birthday.

**Zarthosh-no-Diso** – Day of passing away of Prophet Zarathushtra.

**Sadeh** – the celebration to mark the onset of winter. Includes preparing a large bonfire and known as Adur Jashan (Feast of fire).

**Parabhs** – The festive day in each of the 12 months like Mehrangan (Meher Mah and Meher Roj).

**Gahambars** – Feast of offering to nature. The six Gahambars are Maidyozarem, Maidyoshem, Paitishem, Ayathrem, Maidyarem and Hamaspathmaidem. '



A decorative crystal piece with inscription of three ancient prayers 'Ashem Vohu,' 'Yatha Ahu Variyo' and 'Yenge Hatham' in 'Avestan' language. The lower section contains a beautiful carving of Zarathushtra as well as Persian motifs.

**This DVD contains the right gestures for doing the Kasti.  
DVD Sponsored by: Kersy Bhesania, Dubai.**



Zoroastrians come rejoice  
And sing in joyful strains  
May the Mazdayasni Race  
Live forever in grace!

Our beauties rich and rare  
Our charities beyond compare  
Good thoughts, Good words, Good deeds  
Ahura thank you for these!

Renowned in every land  
We toil with hearts and hands  
Bringing joy to one an all  
We leave our footprints in the sand!

Zoroastrians come unite  
Holding hands with pride  
May Ahura Bless us all  
To spread peace and love worldwide!

-Meher Bhesania