

JASHAN

Our belief in the existence of Ahura Mazda (the Creator) Ameshaspands (Archangles) Yazads, (Angles) spiritual-world, immortality of soul, unseen colours, vibrations, etc. - things which cannot be seen by means of the physical vision or which cannot be easily understood by the intellect alone, we cannot but believe in the efficacy of Zoroastrian rituals. All these seems unintelligible to us at present, because we have not developed our spiritual vision or subtle perception; we are therefore, spiritually blind. Just as colours are invisible to the physically blind, just as scientific inventions like telephones, aeroplanes etc. cannot be understood by unscientific minds the actual working of Zoroastrian rituals cannot be understood by us, for these are processes going on in the RARER AND SUBTLER STAGES of ether - they are ultraphysical. They are spirit of scientific processes producing grand, practical results in the unseen world and are based on an entirely scientific understanding of the subtle and unseen laws of Nature. Some of such grand Fundamental Laws of Nature taught to us by Aṣho Zarathushtra in the Avesta are :-

1. *Zravan*, - the laws of Eternal First motion or Energy pervading every force and object, visible or unseen, thus creating the Idea of Time thereby;
2. *Uru*, - the law of ever widening and ever proceeding, the never-ceasing evolution, or Unfoldment or Spiritual Progress towards the Goal of "One Far-off Divine Event to which the whole creation moves"; - that inherent tendency to advance or go onward which is the essential characteristic of "Urvan" the soul;
3. *Staota*, - the law of vibrations or subtle colours produced by Vibrations of Motion and Sound, which is at the root of all creation;
4. *Khastra*, - the law of the Thermo-Electro-Magnetic Forces and currents working throughout the visible and unseen realms, in indefinitely various forms of electricity or magnetism;
5. *Kharenangh*, - the law of Halo or Emanation

of Subtle Magnetic Aura pertaining to all the Kingdoms - human, animal, vegetable and mineral;

6. *Bareh*, - the law of Thermal Energy of Fires of different rates of intensity;

7. *Manthra*, - the law of the efficacy of the Mystic Words of Charms composed by the Prophet in unison or attunement with the Original Universal Musical Note - the creative Word - Ahuna Var - the law whereby the Urvan or soul can be on rapport with the Music celestial;

8. *Mithra*, - the law of Thought-Energy or Thought Power, its transmission and its effect on persons and things by creating unseen forms in the subtlest states of ultra-physical matter;

9. *Paitioget*, - the law of Retributive Compensation and Universal Adjustment and Obligation with reference to every visible and invisible object and force in the Universe, thus implying the Law of Divine Dispensation of Justice and Equality;

10. *Asha*, - the law of Order, Administration and Holiness Divine, implying the Highest degree of Purity, - physical, mental, moral and spiritual.

WHAT KINDS OF CEREMONIES ARE THERE AND WHAT IS A JASHAN? WHEN DOES ONE PERFORM A JASHAN?

All Zoroastrian rituals are divided into two :-

(1) **THOSE MEANT FOR THE LIVING -**

like the Navjote, Navar, Bareshnoom Jashan etc. &

(2) **THOSE MEANT FOR THE SOULS WHO HAVE PASSED ON.**

Jashan is the general Iranian word for 'festival' - holiday. The word is derived from YASNA (ceremony) and is another form of Yazashne meaning: homage of praise, to worship. So the celebration of an important event or occasion, whether joyful or sad, in a solemn religious way with liturgical services is known as a Jashan.

Jashans are also thanks giving services and are intended to cement the ties of brotherhood.

They could be divided into three classes :-

- (a) Jashans connected with SEASONS and SEASON FESTIVALS such as Gahambar, Jamshedji Navroze, Meherangan, Avaghan Tirangan, Rapithavan and Khordadsal.
- b) Jashans that have some connection with some historical events in ancient Iran.
- c) Jashans performed in honour of the dead.

For example, if it is to celebrate the anniversary of the death of a person, it is said to be "the Jashan of somebody's Baj." If it is the anniversary of a fire Temple, "Jashan of the Salgireh." If it is to celebrate a Gahambar, then "Jashan of the Gahambar."

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Hence one could get a Jashan performed on a deceased person's death anniversary (Roj) or on any of the above festivals, or on days of the same name as the month (like Avan mahino and Avan roj or Adar mahino and Adar roj). It is customary and considered auspicious to have a Jashan performed on one's Birthday or when starting a new project or before (or at the time of) occupying a new house or after a long sickness or on any such thanksgiving occasion.

WHAT PRAYERS ARE RECITED IN A JASHAN CEREMONY?

The liturgical ceremonies which are generally performed in a Jashan are : the AFRINGAN, the BAAJ, the YASNA, the FAROKSHI and the SATUM. The last three may not be performed but the Afringan is an absolute must. In Afringan at least 3 kardas have to be recited :- The FIRST KARDO depends on the type of Jashan. If it is a Gahambar Jashan, then 'Gahambar no kardo' is recited. Second, is the DAHM NO KARDO and the third is that of SAROSH.

WHERE CAN A JASHAN CEREMONY BE PERFORMED AND WHEN?

There are basically 2 types of ceremonies : PAVMAHAL and HOSHMORDI rituals. The Pavmahal ceremonies like the Yazashne Vandidad Nirangdin etc. have to be performed only inside a PAVI-CUT in an Atesh Behram or an Agiary. Jashan is a Hoshmordi ritual and it is not necessary to be performed in any of the Atesh

Kadehs. However, that does not mean that it could be performed anywhere, any time and in any manner. Even a Hushmordi ceremony likethe Jashan, has to be performed within the | framework of religious canons, traditions and practices.

For example, a TEMPORARY PAVI is an absolute must while performing such a ceremony. In the Pavmahal ceremonies, the Pavis are permanent inside the Atesh Kadehs. A temporary Pavi means; a Zoroastrian mopping the floor on which the Jashan is to be performed; Secondly, a double cloth or covering as Paivand is placed on the purified floor, upon which the Jashan things are placed. Hence a Jashan can be performed even at home - as long as the place is clean - rather can be cleaned, and the laws of purity are observed.

Public Jashans are generally performed in a large hall where people can assemble and witness the ceremony.

According to Firdousi there were spacious buildings attached to Fire-Temples for the celebrations of Jashans, as the ancient Persian Kings took pride in celebrating the Jashans with great eclat. Even Muslim writers like Mirkhond, Masudi, Al-Biruni and Tabari refer to the Jashans of the Iranians.

Jashans are performed usually in the morning or evening in the Havan or Ujiren Gah. Sometimes, though rarely, Jashans are performed at night, with the strict exception of the Gahambar Jashans which must be performed before the sun sets.

WHAT PREPARATION IS INVOLVED BEFORE THE ACTUAL CEREMONY TAKES PLACE?

An Atesh Dadgah is lit on the white Chandar, (Paivand) aided by an oil lamp. Because of these procedures, the atmosphere on and around the floor is imbued with VAYU-VEH and TAHEGI (i.e. the atmosphere becomes pure, fresh and free of any spiritual pollution) Here now, prevail the following laws :

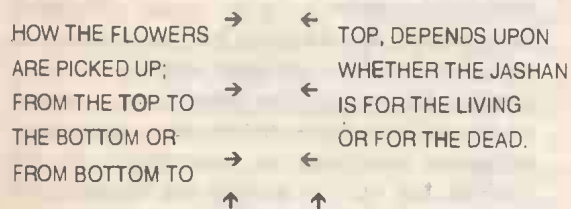
- a) those connected with the Sun's rays, b) those connected with VOYU-VEH c) with ASAR-E-ROSHNI (forces of light) d) with the 7 dakhyus of Meher yazad e) with the 7 Kashwars and f) with the

newly lit up ATESH. Because of these inter connections, the purified floor is finally linked and connected to PAVMAHAL of Nature! All the necessary things are placed along with these, the pair or pairs of mobbed sahebs perform the Kushti-paadyab and sit opposite each other and then begin the ceremony.

WHAT THINGS ARE PLACED ON THE WHITE CHADAR?

Besides the Afargannyu and the oil lamp, sukhad and loban, an item representing each of the four creations of Dadar Ahura Mazda is placed. Milk representing the animal kingdom, fruits and flowers from the vegetable kingdom, Mobed Saheb himself from the Human Kingdom and metal khumchi etc. from the mineral kingdom. Then there is water (sherbat) dry fruit, and malido (made of wheat). The fruit and flowers cannot be just any kind. Apple, banana, especially promogranate, are necessary. Roses are the best among flowers. Flowers play a prominent part in the Jashan-Afringan ceremony.

The association of various flowers with the particular divine powers which are invoked depends upon the moral and spiritual qualities of divine attributes. Eight flowers are arranged in 2 rows - 2 flowers are placed on the right and left facing the fire urn (Afarganniyu) and the next three are arranged above them face to face as under :-



Only certain kinds of things having best and pure magnetic currents, are taken in rituals. Only certain kinds of fruits and flowers (others being prohibited) and water of spring or wells etc., taken in the Jashan ceremony are employed, so as to receive the best electro-magnetic currents emanating from them.

Water has those five hydro-electrical magnetic forces (Adu-frado, van thwo-frado, Gaetho-frado, Kshaeto-frado, Dangu-frado) so often remembered in the Aban yasht and all these Frado or hydroelectric

forces have the best natural efficiency if the water is natural (derived from running streams). This is why only pure water of wells or springs is strictly recommended for use in all Zoroastrian rituals, and the pure running water of wells or springs which is exposed to the visible and dark rays of the sun all day has its Frodo naturally in a very high order of efficiency and activity.

The implements used in the ceremony are purified and care is taken, to see that they are not defiled.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PERFORMING A JASHAN? WHAT GOES ON IN THE CEREMONY? WHAT IS CHASHNI AND WHY SHOULD NON-ZORASTRIANS NOT PARTAKE OF IT OR ATTEND THE CEREMONY?

The primary object of the Jashan ceremony is happiness and good of all those who attend, sought by those who perform, an earnest appeal or sincere supplication made to the Creator and His Ministers of Grace to have mercy and shower blessings on the appellants and the supplicants. How does this happen? How can we attract the Divine Blessings upon ourselves or towards our dear departed? For that, we need to understand how rituals work.

There is a beautiful and a systematic explanation of the working of all individual ceremonies of a certain kind.

In the Jashan ceremony, the officiating priest accumulates all the thermo-electro-magnetic forces from the things placed before him, by means of the staota or colour-vibrations of the Avestic Manthra; and through Bareh or the thermal of the Fire placed before him, he creates a very grand and powerful magnet of the most beautiful spiritual unseen currents and forces. This accumulation of currents is forwarded through Fire to the realms of the unseen world which is a region of highly accelerated vibrations. As a result of this, in accordance with the laws of attraction or attunement, the beneficent spiritual forces from Yazads or angels, rain down here to meet the force going above from the Jashan-ceremony officiator. Thus an actual shower of higher spiritual forces and currents, is brought down here and propagated over a large compass, by means of all such ceremonies like the Jashan ceremony, intended to benefit the living.

An example : You may have seen Mobed Sahebs exchanging flowers, touching the 'Khoodcha', deevo, water and air. Here he is trying to maintain contact with objects which represent mineral kingdom (metal khoodcho) deevo (fire) and air-creations of Ahura Mazda. Among other things, the Zoota has to keep his eyes riveted on 2 of the eight flowers. In picking up these flowers and exchanging them between the **Zoti** and **Rathwi** or **Raspi** (Atravakhshi) there is a symbolic meaning, indicating the coming of the soul from above to this world, and the prayer which is recited (humatanam, hukhatanam, hvarshtanam - Yasna 35-2) while doing the picking up indicates that there are three steps of Good Thoughts, Good words and Good Deeds, and that by following the righteous and great ones in their goodness, one can pass from this mundane existence into Paradise.

Then, with the ladle or tongs, four sides and four corners of the Karasyo (a beaker of water) are touched while reciting a Yatha Ahu varyo and an Ashem Vohu respectively. This indicates the movement of the sun and man's limitations, and also the foundations on which he can build his future. Then the priests recite "**Hamazore Hama Ashobad**" (May you be one in strength and co-operate with us in the ceremony, and may you be Asho i.e. Righteous) by passing their hands into each other's hand in a particular way. Behind this physical "hamazore" of passing the hands there is a spiritual meaning, this Hamazore is between Man and Man, Man and Nature and Nature's God.

The Mobed is supposed to create powerful, thought-forces and cast constantly from his eyes, the **Vohufryan fire-energy** that he possesses, on the two flowers. When he does that, that is when his eyes radiate his personal magnetic force containing **ATESH-E-VOHUFRIYAN**, the flowers, which have the **ATESH-E-URVAZISHT** (**URVAZISHT** fire-energy in them), attract and absorb the **VOHUFRIYAN** fire-energy, on the principal of, "opposites attract". The result is that just as an electric battery is first charged and stored with the electric current, so that it can be used whenever needed, so also the two flowers become highly charged with the Mobed's thought-force and

his **VOHUFRIYAN** fire-energy.

The ultimate object of all Zoroastrian rituals is to create an accumulation of very fine electric and magnetic forces and currents, and by means of a battery invisible thus created to accelerate the thought-and-word-vibrations towards the direction of the departed soul for which the rituals are performed, or for the living.

One such ceremony is that of a Jashan. In a Jashan, an Afringan is a must. Each Afringan is recited in three parts :- a) The **Dibache** or Preface b) The Afringan proper in Avesta language, and c) The **Pazand Afrin**.

a) The **Dibache** is written in **Pazand** language. At the outset the Zoti declares that he does it for God's Bank and that the reward of all his prayers may go to the treasury of Ahura Mazda i.e. for the good of all his fellow - creatures. That is what one may call "spiritual Socialism". He also remembers and recites the names starting with our Holy Prophet Zarathushtra and his family members, going through saints, kings, deities, heroes and leaders from ancient times to modern periods including names of those who built the community and preserved it.

NAM-GRAHAN. It is a custom that in the recital of the **Dibache** of the Afringan, the Zoti (senior officiating priest) recites the names of the deceased members of a family from a list called **Namgrahan**. We consider it a great honour to include in public Jashans and **Dhupnirang** prayers, the names of people who have worked for the welfare of the community or have led a noble and exemplary life. According to very old custom, the right of adding the name to the **Namgrahan** vests in the **Dastur** or **Panthaki** of a religious centre; for example the **Dasturs** of **Udwada** would include the name of our dear departed **Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nawroji Shroff**.

b) The **Manthras** that priests recite, in Avesta and **Pazand**, create powerful vibratory colours in the atmosphere. These **Manthras** are recited before the **Atash**, round which, towards the end of Afringaan, the "**chuck farvaani kriya**" (the right of circumambulation

and drawing the circuit) is also performed.

The Atesh-E-Roshni (the current force of Boundless Divine Light emanating in Nature) which we are trying to attract in the ceremony, moves in concentric circles and the circumferences of these circles are different for souls belonging to different Jirms. We are not saying inferior or superior. They are different but they all belong to SPENAMIN ONLY. In Avesta such concentric circles are called RATHWYA CHAKRAS. The very word RATHWYA is derived from RATU which in turn is derived from ART = Truth. Thus, RATHWYA CHAKRA literary means, moving along the straight path of truthfulness.

Each person, if he adheres to the path of the religion he is born into, is "moving along the path of truthfulness" His Rathwya Chakra.

Now, GANAMIN is always keen to make this RATHWYA, A-RATHWYA! How, can a GANAMIN succeed in the case of our HUSHMORDI rituals?

He can succeed in two ways: (1) If the ritual is performed in such a way that it is subject to the magnetic vibrations and radiations emanating from the eyes (VANTHWO FRADO) of those persons who belong to another concentric circle (RATHWYA CHAKRA) i.e. if the Jashan or similar ceremony, which is Zarhosti BURJISHI ceremony is performed before anyone whose magnetic radiations are not BURJISHI, such vibrations throw a big spanner in the works of the JASHAN ceremony. In short, GANAMIN succeeds in topsy turvyng the RATHWYA CHAKRA and converting it into A-RATHWYA CHAKRA! (2) So also, the MYAZDA or MEJ (fruits, Drun) which are placed near the DADGAH before the priests, while the ceremony is conducted, and which are imbued with the benevolent Divine Currents of nature or the blessings of Ahura Mazda, if they are partaken by those whose VOHUFRAYAN (the fire energy which prevails in all humans and animals and operates on different frequencies) is different from BURJISHI VOHUFRYAN frequency, the Rathwya Chakra collapses and becomes A-RATHWYA!

As internal evidence, to support what has

been said above, we shall cite the AFRINAMI KARAS of the JASHAN Ceremony itself. There is shown how a JASHAN becomes successful and efficacious. The priest says, "May we conquer and vanquish all those enemies who bring all kinds of diseases and curses, and all those who are selfish, vindictive people (who upset the canons of the faith and thereby bring upon Nature's wrath) their A-RATHWYA thoughts, words and deeds, i.e. those who aid and abet GANAMIN in overthrowing RATHWYA CHAKRA." Here we are not referring to Non-Zoroastrians but Zoroastrians who go against their Religion.

Thus, a JASHAN Ceremony performed carelessly, indifferently or in presence of Non-Zoroastrians is not only invalid, but it provokes Nature's ire on the community for flouting the canons, laws and practice of the Zoroastrian faith and for tinkering with the sacred rituals!

Chashni, which comes from the verb Chashedan to taste, Gujarati 'chakhvun', is called myazda or mej. This comprises selected fruit, Drun etc. and is placed near the Dadgah while the ceremony is conducted, whereby every item in the Chashni is charged with subtle electro magnetic currents and has absorbed the vibrations of Manthra recitations which are Divine Currents, beneficial for Zoroastrian souls who need such Avestic compositions. A Hindu may need the Sanskrit Shlokas and so on. Thus this is a delicate matter, mysterious in explanation; in which, logic, common sense and sentiments do not determine the reasons. It should be looked upon from a holistic and cosmic point of view and observed in obedience to Religious laws, canons and traditions. If explained carefully and diplomatically to Non-Zoroastrians, one could avert a lot of disunity and disregard to Religious Laws in the name of tolerance.

c) The Zoti then concludes the consecration with 'Afrin' or benedictions in Pazend language.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THOSE WHO ATTENDED THE JASHAN CEREMONY?

Whenever a Jashan is performed on behalf of an Anjuman i.e. those who have contributed

and who are present there, the words used in the Afringan clearly state that : "Farmayashney Hamaa Anjuman Mazdayasni Beresad" - May all these reach according to the request of the Mazdayasni Anjuman!

As participants we should note and try to observe the following :-

- a) Before the ceremony starts, (just as the mobed sahebs) perform the padyab kusti, All those who are present, should also do the same.
- b) Throughout the ceremony, try and attune yourselves to the mobed sahebs.
- c) Refrain from talking and check and control your wandering thoughts.
- d) Always offer and thus contribute towards the Jashan ceremony. Whether it is money, flowers, fruit, mevo or something cooked, sukhad or loban, it is mubaarak to do so.
- e) Take utmost care to be in a pure state : physical and mental and wear decent white clothes. Cover the head properly.

WHO CAN PERFORM THE JASHAN CEREMONY?

A Jashan is performed by either one or more pair of mobeds. The two Mobeds are : RATHAVA

(asst.) and ZAOTA who initiates the Afringan proper and is supposed to be a practitioner of high mental and physical purity. Since this is a Hoshmordi (outer liturgical) ceremony, it is not necessary that the Mobed should be a **martab** or be in 'Bareshnoom'. In case a mobed is not available, even Behdins, who can recite the prayers and have a know-how, can perform.

Hope this is enough for the present. These Ceremonies are PRESCRIBED by Divine Authorities and are to be performed 'ba-kanoon'. Never speculate upon or question your Scriptures. Stick to the Path laid down by your Prophet irrespective of what others say or think. Remember this : It is better to displease Men than to displease God. With Ahura Mazda's blessings.

- **Silloo Mehta**

Material taken from :

- a) Zoroastrianism - Ancient and Modern; Ervad Phiroze Masani.
- b) The Religious Ceremonies and Ancient Customs of the Parsees; Dr. Sir J. J. Mody.
- c) Discourses of Zoroastrianism; Ervad Godrej Sidhwa.
- d) Articles in Dini Avaz by Adi Doctor