

JASHAN (The Parsi Version)

The word Jashan means an important occasion or an important event and the communal ceremony performed to commemorate or celebrate this occasion is also called Jashan. During this ceremony we praise Ahura Mazda and invoke the Amesha Spentas and the Fravashis.

Types of Jashans

1. Zinderavan This Jashan is performed at seasonal festivals such as Gahambars, auspicious occasions such as birthdays and historical events such as Meherigan.
2. Rawan This Jashan is performed to commemorate sad historical events (Zarthost no Diso), death anniversaries of family members and during Mukhtad.

Implements Required for the Jashan

Fruits, nuts and malido (wheat pudding), placed in metallic trays, are used in this ceremony. The fruits are washed and partially cut so that the Fravashis from the spiritual world may sample their essence. A beaker of water, a pot of milk, a glass of wine and flowers are also used. The ceremony is performed on a white sheet spread on the floor. A Divo (oil-lamp) and an Afarganyu (Fire-vase) in which a fire is kept burning with Sukhad (sandlewood) and Loban (incense, frankincense) are employed in this ceremony. Chipyo (metallic tongs) and Chamach (metallic ladle) are used to tend the fire.

During the Jashan ceremony we also invoke the Amesha Spentas. To understand the term Amesha Spenta, we have to refer to the Gathas, which are the hymns or songs composed by Zarathustra. In his Gathas Zarathustra describes certain attributes, characteristics, qualities of Ahura Mazda and hundreds of years after Zarathustra's time these attributes were personified and believed to be Divine Beings called Amesha Spentas. Western scholars have translated the term Amesha Spentas as Bounteous Immortals. These Amesha Spentas were later linked to some of the creations of Ahura Mazda and believed to be the guardian of these creations. During the Jashan, the Amesha Spentas and the creations are symbolically represented by the implements used in the ceremony as follows:

Order	Creation	Amesha Spenta	Represented by
1.	Sky	Khshathra Vairya	metallic implements
2.	Water	Hauravat	water in a beaker
3.	Earth	Spenta Armaiti	place of ceremony
4.	Plants	Ameretat	flowers and fruits
5.	Cattle	Vohu Manoh	the milk in the pot
6.	Man	Spenta Mainyu	the performer
7.	Fire	Asha	fire in afarganyu

The Jashan Ritual

This Jashan ceremony can be performed by priests or laity and is generally performed by two to four persons. The principal performer of the ceremony is called ZOATAR. All other performers are called RASPI i.e. assistant from the Avestan root "rac", to help; or "Rathwi", an offerer from the root "ra", to give. The term "Atravakshi" meaning one who feeds (vaksh) the fire (Atar) is also used because during

the ceremony this performer sits near the Afarganyu and feeds the fire.

The following prayers are recited during the Jashan ceremony:

- A. Atash Nyaish and Doa-Nam Satayashne
- B. Afringans and Afrins
- C. Doa Tan Doroshti

The Zoatar recites all the prayers while the Raspi recites parts A and C and only certain sections of part B.

Atash Nyaish

This prayer is recited in front of the Fire. In his Gathas Zarathustra describes Ahura Mazda as Raêvatô which in Avestan language means splendid and Kharenanguhatô which means glorious. The words "Ahura Mazdao Raêvatô Kharenanguhatô" are recited 9 times during the Jashan ceremony. We Zoroastrians do not attribute any form, shape or color to Ahura Mazda. We do not make any images (idols) from clay, wood or metal to represent Ahura Mazda because, to us, Ahura Mazda is an ever glowing eternal light from which flows (emanates) goodness and wisdom.

When we pray in front of a fire we are not praying to the Fire but we believe that we are standing in the presence of the radiating power of Ahura Mazda. Fire is the provider of heat and light which are the very source of life and growth and without heat and light life cannot exist on this planet. (When we pray before a fire we pay homage to the creation that represents life and the inherent nature of Ahura Mazda - total goodness.

In the Avesta, which is the collection of all our religious scriptures, FIRE expresses multi-dimensional ideas such as the fire of inspiration, the fire of love, the fire of emotion, the fire of compassion, the fire of devotion, the fire of the life that burns within all of us.

Fire is also linked to Asha i.e. truth and righteousness. On the psychological level Asha is the powerful force of truth; while, at the physical level, Asha represents order, evolution, and progress. Asha has been defined as the spiritual truth, scientific truth, philosophical truth, social truth.

Our mission in this life is not to seek fame and fortune or other superfluous material values but to promote Asha (Righteousness) for only that will bring happiness to ourselves and all around us and it will make this world a better place not only for the present generation but for generations to come.

Nam Setâyashne

The nâm (name) setâyashne (praise) is a prayer in adoration of Ahura Mazda, who is known as Ohormaz (Hormazd) in the Pahlavi language. The prayer starts with the words:

pa nâm i ýazad i baxshâyañdêh i baxshâyashgar i meherbân,
nâm setâyashne ôi hōrmazd hamâ bût u hamâ hast u hamâ bêt.

In his name, who is the greatest, who is the wisest who is the best dispenser of justice, we praise Ohrmazd, who always was, always is and always will be, ie Ahura Mazda is the creator but he himself was never created.

After praising Ahura Mazda the prayer ends with the words:

setâishne i dâdâr hôrmaszd i harvasp- âgâh u tavânâ u tavañgar,
haft amshâspañd u bêhrâm ýazadi pîrôzgar dushman-zadâr ama hutâshte bê rasât.

All praise to the creator Ohrmazd, the omniscient, omnipotent (invincible, unstoppable), and powerful, and to the seven Amahraspands, to the victorious Yazad Warharan, the vanquisher of foes, and to the well-shapen (Yazad) Ama (strength). (May all these) come (to my help).

Afringhan

The Afringhan is a prayer expressive of love and praise and is recited for the "Khshnuman" of a particular Divine Being. The word "Khshnuman" comes from the Avestan root "Khshnu", to please, to satisfy. Usually three Afringans are recited, the first Afringhan varies according to the occasion:

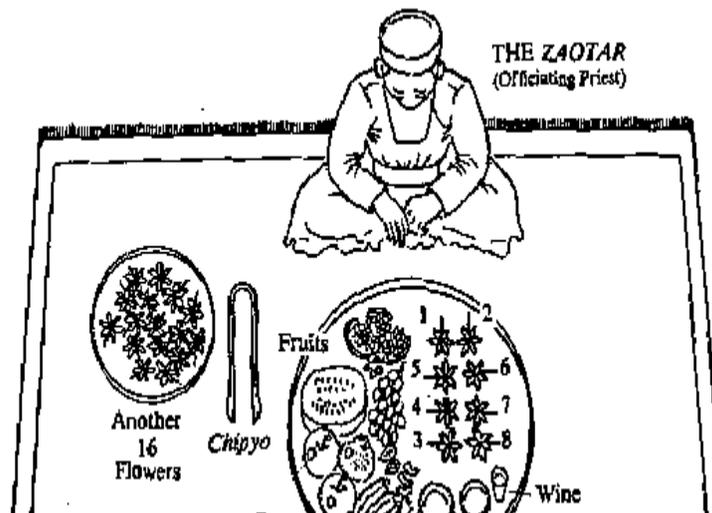
Occasion	Afringhan
celebration	Dadar Hormazd
Gahambar	Gahambar
Mukhtad	Ardafravash
Death anniversary	Ardafravash

The second and third Afringans are usually Dahm and Sarosh respectively. Each Afringhan consists of the Pazend (the re-writing of the Pahalavi text into Avestan script) Dibache and the Afringhan proper in Avestan language. The word Dibache is Persian and means preface. In the Dibache the reciter first announces the name of the Divine Being who is to be invoked during the Afringhan. Then the Fravashis of the dead are invoked and famous Zoroastrians of the past are propitiated. Finally, the names of persons who directed (farmayashne) the performance of the ceremony are announced. Each dibache is followed by the Afringhan proper during which the appropriate formula praising that particular Divine Being and its attributes is recited. Some parts of this prayer are taken from the Siroza Yasht.

The general rule in reciting the Avesta prayers is that all portions in Pazend or in later Persian language, whenever they occur at the beginning or the end of the Avestan prayers, are to be recited in a loud tone. But when they occur in the midst of Avestan prayers or an aggregate of prayers, they are to be intoned in a suppressed voice called the Baj. Thus during the Jashan ceremony only the Dibache of the first Afringhan is recited aloud. The dibaches of the second (Dahm) and the third (Sarosh) Afringans are recited in Baj.

At least 24 flowers or petals are required for the ceremony. During each Afringhan the Zoatar takes 8 flowers and lays them in two columns as shown in the Figure below. Flowers numbered 3 to 8 face each other while flowers 1 and 2 are placed parallel to one another.

After reciting the Dibache, the Zoatar and the Raspi together pray the Fravarane (articles of faith) followed by the appropriate Gah and Khshuman (invocation). Then reciting three Ashem Vohus the Zoatar picks the first two flowers (1 & 2 in the Fig.) and gives one to the Raspi who now stands up to receive them. The Raspi while receiving the flower recites the words "Ahurahe Mazdao Raevato Khareanghato" (Ahura Mazda



Glorious and Brilliant) and is joined by the Zoatar on the word "Afrinami" (Bless).

The performers now begin to pray a portion from the Afringan of Burjog (pious begins, co-workers). Upon completion of this prayer they exchange the two flowers. In his book, "The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees", Dastoor Dr. Jivanji Modi says that this gesture symbolizes the exchange of lives between this physical world and the next spiritual world.

Both priests then recite a verse from Yasna 35:

humatanām hūxtanām hvarshtanām
yadacâ anyadacâ verezyamnanāmcâ vâverezananāmcâ
mahî aibî-jaretârô naênaêstârô ýathanâ vohunām mahî

We praise good thoughts, good words, and good deeds,
performed here and elsewhere, now and in the past.
Thus we glorify and invoke all that is good.

Upon the words "humatanam, hukhtanam, hvarshtanam" the Zoatar picks three flowers (3, 4 & 5 in the Fig.) from the upper right-hand corner moving downwards and gives them to the Raspi who receives them while touching the right-hand side of the Afarganyu with the chamach (ladle). The three flowers are supposed to represent Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. Then the same verse is repeated and the Zoatar picks three other flowers (6, 7 and 8 in the Fig.), this time from the lower left-hand column moving upwards, and gives them to the Raspi who receives them while touching the left-hand side of the Afarganyu with the chamach.

Again, according to Dastoor Dr. Jivanji Modi this process symbolizes that a soul has to come down to this physical world, live in this world and then pass away to the next spiritual world with the triad of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

Making sure that the chamach is touching the Afarganyu the Raspi transfers the chamach from one hand to the other and thus completes the circuit between him and the fire. The Zoatar holds the chipyo (tongs) in his right hand with which he touches the Afarganyu and simultaneously with his left hand he touches the tray of fruits.

The Figure is taken from: "Zoroastrianism: An Ethnic Perspective" by Khojeste Mistree

The ritual circuit is completed by both participants touching the Afarganyu upon which burns the fire. At this point the Zoatar represents the pillar of doctrine while the Raspi represents the pillar of practice. The prayers are then intoned in a suppressed voice i.e. recited in Baj.

After completing the Baj both performers recite aloud one Yatho Vairyo as the Zoatar touches the four points of the water beaker with his chipyo, in an up-down, right-left motion then touches the other implements and finally the Afarganyu to complete the circuit. Next, they recite one Ashem Vohu as the Zoatar touches the same water beaker with the chipyo at four other points, NE, NW, SE, SW, the implements, and finally the Afarganyu. The symbolism of this gesture is to generate spiritual energy from the water and it is believed that through this gesture the spirits bless the food offerings which are consumed by the members of the congregation at the end of the ceremony.

The Raspi hands back the seven flowers to the Zoatar as they recite two Yatho Vairyos. The Raspi does a ritual handshake with the Zoatar while reciting, in Baj, the words, "Hamazor Bead Hamo Asho Bead" which means let us be one in strength (Righteousness). In olden days the Raspi would then exchange

this greeting with a member of the congregation and the greeting was generally exchanged among those present. The Raspi then sits down and the performers recite a section from Yasna 35 to end the first Afringan.

As mentioned earlier, the dibaches of the next Afringans are prayed in Baj because these are in Pazend and they occur between two Avestan prayers. However, the structure and the rituals for these Afringans remain the same as the first, except the words in some portions of these prayers vary accordingly, The exchange of flowers (using the next set of eight) is repeated during each Afringan.

After the completion of the Afringans, the Zoatar alone recites the Afrins. The word Afrin literally means benediction or blessing. In the first section of the Afrin the worshipper prays that the spiritual strength of the ceremony and ritual may reach all. The following words are repeated several times throughout the Afrin:

Pa ganje Dadar Ahura Mazda rayomand khorehmand
(For the treasury of creator Ahura Mazda (who is) radiant and glorious).

This means that the prayers of the worshippers are to go to the "ganje" (treasury) of Ahura Mazda from which they may be distributed to all. This suggests that the influence of even one worshipper is far reaching because his prayers are not for his own self but for all fellow human beings.

Finally, the Doa Tan Doroshti is recited for the health, happiness and prosperity of those who had the ceremony performed and for the well being of the community and mankind.

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