

## **No permanent friend, nor a permanent enemy**

### **The only reality in this illusory world is Truth**

#### **The message of the divine festival of Meherangan, as explained by Ilm-e-Khshnoom**

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One of the fundamental messages brought by our Master, Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff from the Abed Sahebs of Demavand was the need to observe the right Zoroastrian festivals (called *Hingam*) at their right time in Nature, and with the right attitude. Ustad Saheb explained that the earth is constantly showered with the blessings of Ahura Mazda. These blessings are captured by Parsis through the agency of the *Sudreh-Kusti* and the *Manthra* prayers. However, there are special times when Ahura Mazda showers exceptional blessings on the entire world. These are the days of specific Zoroastrian festivals like the *Gahambars*, *Parabs* and *Muktad*. On these holiest of days, Parsis should unite and collectively celebrate the festivals and partake of the supreme blessings of the Lord.

Ustad Saheb revealed that it was necessary to observe these festivals at the right time. The observance of Zoroastrian festivals is based on the movement of the Sun through the Zodiac. At specific times, as the Sun passes through various Signs, definite blessings descend on the Earth. Hence the importance of following the correct seasonal calendar (called *Fasal*) as far as observing the festivals is concerned. However Ustad Saheb emphasised that for all daily prayers and other ceremonial purposes, the current historical calendar based on which the Navjote was done should be followed. Ustad Saheb also stressed the need for the community to observe these festivals with the right attitude. Community gatherings like *Gahambars*, *Parab Jashans* and the *Muktad* days need to be celebrated with a sense of solemn religious fervour, and not with senseless fun and entertainment. Certain thoughts (called *Mithra*) need to be passed by the collective assembly (*Anjuman*) in order to catch the blessings of the festival.

The second issue of the Journal comes to you at a time of great cosmic significance, since it coincides with the commemoration of *Meherangan*, which falls on *Roz Meher, Mah Meher*, or 2<sup>nd</sup> October every year. The Meherangan is the second most important day of the Zarathushtrian year, after *Jamshedi Navroze*, or the New Year, which falls on 21<sup>st</sup> March. The new year marks the beginning of the sun's perambulation in the Zodiac, as it enters the sign of Aries. The topic of the Zodiac, and various other facets of astronomy are of a highly technical nature and deserve a series of articles in their own right. Without going into the specifics of cosmography, (which we shall cover in a different series to begin soon) we will confine ourselves to saying that the movement of the Sun through the signs of the Zodiac triggers various specific cosmic occurrences, which have a direct relationship with man on earth and his spiritual progress and ultimate salvation.

On the day of Navroze, the entry of the Sun into the sign of Aries activates the descent of a specific cosmic energy, called *Atash-i-Berezo Savangh* from the Immortal Universe (*Hasti*), through the Mortal Universe (*Nisti*) and ultimately on to the earth (*Geti*). The descent of this beatific energy results in a transformation in the mind of the evil spirit, *Ghana Mino*, who temporarily stops his relentless attempt to destroy the good creations of *Spena Mino*, his adversary. They enter into a symbolic alliance, lasting for the day, which results in a wave of true friendship, love and brotherhood pervading the entire universe. This overwhelming current of friendship encourages all other creations to also enter into similar bonds with those they normally would keep away from. The seeds of this everlasting friendship (which currently of course only lasts for that day) get implanted in the souls of all these creations, and even though they resume their fight the next day, the seeds remain within themselves, slowly, but surely, germinating. Six months later, on the day of Meherangan, the germinated plant produces its fruit. It is the spiritual duty of every single creation, including man, to partake of this fruit of everlasting love and friendship, and forever convert his evil into good.

Thus the key to a spiritually successful life lies in realising that we have no permanent friends, nor any eternal enemies. The various struggles we go through are the result of the world of illusion we live in. The diverse obligations we fulfil and the rewards we receive are the results of our own past and present thoughts, words and deeds. The

festival of Meherangan is an important reminder of this great principle, not only because of what has been explained above, but also due to the fact that the only constant in this illusory world is Truth. Truth is not that which we perceive to be as true or which one feels is true. Those are merely relative thoughts. The Truth, which exists in nature is very different from our personal perception of truth and falsehood. The real and eternal Truth is personified in the form of the worshipful being (*Yazata*) *Meher*, or in Avesta, *Mithra*.

The common meaning of the words *Meher* (Pahlavi) and *Mithra* (Avesta) is 'justice'. But there are several other meanings which can be attributed to these words. One of the keys to unravelling the mysteries of the Avesta lies in the awareness of the existence of and understanding the nature of what are technically known as *logat* or KEYWORDS. These are normal nouns or verbs with common meanings, but when taken as KEYWORDS they change the entire perspective of the text. For example, the words *Zravane Daregho Khadata* can be literally translated as 'the long time'. Yet our Master revealed that these three words are to be taken as one single KEYWORD whose meaning is not just a long period of time, rather it refers to the 81,000 year long life cycle of the earth, the mysteries of which are being explained in the series of articles on Iranian history. In the same manner, the literal meaning of Mithra is indeed justice, or truth. Moreover, Mithra Yazata is rightly associated as a Divine Being, who is identified with the light emanating from the sun.

However, there exists a deeper, more technical understanding of Mithra, when it is identified as a KEYWORD. The word *Mithra* conveys the power or ability of anything to merge with the Creator. Any creation, which maintains Righteous Contact with the Creator, has the power to ultimately merge within Him. This property of Mithra is technically known as *Yaon*. Mithra and *Yaon* always co-exist with two other entities, *Rashne* ('Truth') and *Armaiti* ('Humility'). Thus the common meaning of Mithra as a divine being working within the overall plan of Creation (*Ahunavar*), is also to be supplemented with the technical meaning of a certain quality, possessed by all types of creation which when properly activated and channelled, can lead that creation to the Creator.

The simplest meaning of Meher is to own up for whatever has happened – in other words, speak the truth. Once a person owns up to what he has, or has not done, it is his duty to step away from such an act – technically known as the offering of *Patet*. For example, a person commits a crime. His owning up to it constitutes Mithra, whereas his resolution to not commit the crime again constitutes Patet. The quality of man to speak the truth arose, because he felt it would be in the best interest of not only himself, but also his *Ruvan* (Avesta *urvan*, ‘soul’), his faith, his family and the whole world if he were to do so. He did so even though he realised that he would temporarily be at a disadvantage by speaking the truth, since he would have to suffer some punishment or retribution for the act. This quality of sacrificing the short term for the long term arose because of his love for his soul, his faith, his family and the entire world. Thus the word Meher also stands for desire, love.

This sacrifice on the part of the man in turn causes creation and nature to bestow compassion, mercy on him. Hence one of the meanings of Meher is also compassion, from which arises the Persian word ‘*meherbani*’ ‘mercy, compassion’. As a result of receiving divine compassion, the man moves towards his Creator, hence leading us to the deeper meaning of Meher as one which joins something with its Creator. As the man moves towards his Creator, he begins to think in synchronisation with nature and the Creator, leading us to the understanding that one of the meanings of Meher/Mithra is also ‘thought’. As the thoughts of the man become more and more sublime, he begins losing all traces of his ego, and instead begins cultivating the virtues of Armaiti - humility, patience and contentment. The cultivation of Armaiti causes the transformation of his thoughts from selfishness to selflessness, giving rise to the condition of *Bundak Manashni* – the Perfection of Thought. The Perfection of Thought – the realisation that there is none except the Creator, that we are non-entities, who are under the protection of the Creator; causes a singular strength to arise in the man – where he now starts propagating the virtues of truth and Patet. He thus becomes enlightened by the radiance of Meher, which leads us to the meaning of Meher as ‘light’. As an enlightened being, the man stops getting lead by his physical senses, and instead begins perceiving the real truths of nature. Hence he becomes one blessed by *Rashne* – the Real Truth, which is how we come back to the meaning of Meher as Truth – not sensory or perceived truth, but the Real Truth, not blinkered by the weaknesses of our physical senses. He now sees his place and role in Nature, and

performs his appointed role, and ultimately merges back with his Creator, thereby making us understand the accuracy of the deeper meaning of Meher as that quality which makes one join back with our Creator. It is in this manner that the real beauty of Khshnoom is revealed by its ability to synthesize the apparent and the hidden meanings to arrive at a holistic understanding of Mithra, or any other Avesta KEYWORDS.

We have seen above that on specific days, different beatific energies of Ahura Mazda descend on the earth and that there are definite methods (the celebration of the relevant Hingam) to enable humans to catch and assimilate these blessings within them. The ultimate objective of these energies is salvation, which in the short term view of man can be viewed as attaining the state of immortality. However, the actions of man are such that despite his assimilation of some of these energies, a time comes when the physical body of man gives way, and death occurs. It is for this reason that in addition to the beatific energies, there also exists a stream of energies which bring to man the results of his own past thoughts, words and deeds, which we today understand by using the term 'fate, fortune or luck.' Thus the assimilation of the various beatific, as well as reactionary (technically called *Keshash*) energies can happen in two different ways. These methods of assimilation are referred to by the technical KEYWORDS *Mazdadata*, and *Ahuradata*. In this instance also we shall realise how the lack of awareness about the existence of the KEYWORDS in Avesta result in an improper or inadequate understanding of the real message contained in the scriptures. The word *Mazdadata* (some prefer *Mazdadhata*) is commonly translated as 'created by Mazda', whereas *Ahuradata* is translated as 'created by Ahura'. In normal philology, both terms are taken as meaning one and the same thing – created by Ahura Mazda. Yet our Master revealed the hidden meaning behind these two KEYWORDS. He explained that the entire process of creation, existence and the ultimate merging of everything back with the Creator is governed by two fundamental paths – *Mazdadata* and *Ahuradata*. The principle governing the process of creation unfolding, with every step downwards from the Creator is denoted by the KEYWORD *Mazdadata*; whereas the process of folding back, where every step takes one closer to the Creator is denoted by the KEYWORD *Ahuradata*.

Thus the method of assimilation of the beatific energies which descend on the earth can be either of the Ahuradata or the Mazdadata type. The process whereby man assimilates the beatific energies in a manner which causes his body as well as his soul to develop is called Ahuradata; whereas the process of assimilation of the beatific energies which only cause the physical well being of the person, without any effect on his soul is called Mazdadata. This concept needs some further elaboration. The beatific energies which descend on the earth have manifold effects on every aspect of creation. In the case of man, the energies at a very basic level cause his physical well being, make his body disease free or disease tolerant, and extend his life span. But in addition to these physical benefits, the beatific energies also contain within themselves the power to teach man the essence of his religion, enlighten his mind as to the reality of nature and take him on the path of Meher Patet as explained above. The choice as to which path to take rests with man. Should he chooses the path of Ahuradata, he assimilates the physical wellbeing effects of the divine energies, and also imbibes their soul uplifting properties. He then walks the path of Meher, from the stages of truth, love, compassion, union, perfect mindedness, illumination and enlightenment.

But when man adopts the path of Mazdadata, he is only concerned with his physical well-being. He disregards the practices of his religion, becoming a slave to his physical senses, and ultimately falling in sin. At this time, based on the laws of *Paitioget* (rightful retribution), the reactionary energies which descend along with the beatific energies enter his body and give him his just reward, which we feel is our 'misfortune, bad fate or ill luck'. These reactionary energies have their effect on man, he becomes more circumspect about his choices, and ultimately lead him to adopt the path of Ahuradata.

One may question as to how these beatific and reactionary energies enter man, and in what manner they effect the changes within him. In order to answer these queries it is necessary to have a brief look into the constitution of man. According to the Avesta, the human body is composed of nine bodies, divided into three groups of three bodies each. The first group of three bodies, which we may call the Physical Group, consists of *Tanu* – the physical body, skeletal and muscular system; *Gaetha* – the various internal organs and diverse systems within the body; and *Azda* – the nervous and

circulatory systems as well as the liquid profiles within the body. The second group of three bodies, which we may call the Ultra-physical Group, consists of the *Keherp* – the astral body which contains within it 16 spinning centres, called *Chakhras*, which have the ability to attract, absorb and distribute the diverse energies descending on to the earth; the *Ushtan* – the life breath of the body, connected to the life breath of the person's religion and its Prophet; and *Tevishi* – the emotions body which is also the seat of inspiration. The third group of three bodies, which we may refer to as the Divine group contains the *Urvan* – soul, part of the original whole soul which has been fragmented by the process of Mazdadata; the *Baodangh* – the Divine Wisdom of Ahura Mazda, a part of which is contained in every creation; and *Fravashi* – the Spirit of Implicit Obedience, the mother who guides all the other bodies.

Man goes to great lengths to keep in good shape his physical body which is perhaps the only body known to him and which, despite his best efforts, will ultimately give way one day. Yet there are several instances of persons, especially numerous Jain monks, who live for long periods of time, without taking any form of physical food or nourishment. The Zarathushtrian mystic revelation explains that the visible body, which takes part in all the daily activities of life and which is known in the Avesta as *Ahum Mashim* (Gatha Ushtavaiti, Yasna 46.11) draws its sustenance from the subtle body Azda. The Azda is the powerhouse from which the physical body draws its life-enabling current. The Azda is also the spiritual laboratory from which the various qualities, which distinguish one person from the other, emerge. This laboratory of the Azda is known in the Avesta as '*Vasimcha yam panchas dwaram*' – 'the mansion of 50 doors'. Thus the Azda is the nucleus, the *Ahum*, around which the physical body gravitates. The Azda, in turn draws its sustenance from the Keherp. The Keherp itself can be divided into two parts. The first part is attached to the physical body in all respects, known technically as the *Khaki Keherp*. The second part of the Keherp, despite being in the body, stays aloof from it. This part is in direct contact and communion with the external Nature. This is the sacred part of our being, which can maintain a connection with the diverse spiritual entities working as part of the Plan of Ahu. It is in this sacred area of our body, technically known as the *Atashi Keherp* (which also includes part of the *Atashi Tevishi* and *Atashi Ushtan*) where the Urvan and Baodangh reside. Within this sacrosanct area, is found a part of the Beneficent Nature – called *Gav*. Just as water is the source of all physical existence, so also the

Gav is the spiritual source of all life in the Mundane Universe. The life giving and supporting qualities of the Gav are handed over by the Keherp to the Azda, *once every year*. The Azda, in turn, supplies this life sustaining Gav to the physical body, *once every year. This is the day of the Meherangan*. The significance and great spiritual import of the Meherangan will now become apparent.

Thus within every man, there exist two distinct bodies – the physical – which draws sustenance from food and man’s physical mind; and the spiritual – which draws its sustenance from the observance of the various religious disciplines enshrined in the religion, known technically as the *Druj-Parhez Tarikats*. It is therefore apparent that the Zarathushtrian religion is not, rather cannot be, a purely ethical religion. The age old practices of the religion cannot be explained away as mere anthropological or societal observances. Rather they are the lifeline of the religion. This is the reason that they are themselves venerated in the Avesta as ‘*Dareghayao Upayana*’ – the ‘Long-standing Established Practices’. The Pahlavi Masters translated this Avesta phrase as ‘*Awar Rowashni*’ – that which descends from the old times to the new. To make it even more clear, *Dastur Nairyosangh’s* Sanskrit translation renders this phrase as ‘*Shiksha Adrushyarupini*’ – the Invisible Knowledge of Tradition.

It is the practice of these traditions which lends sustenance to the spiritual part of our bodies, and in turn enables them to catch and assimilate the diverse beatific blessings which descend on the earth on the various occasions we have seen above. The grand edifice of Zarathushtrian cosmic festivals is based on the three great observances of Jamshedi Navroze – the beginning of the year; the Meherangan – the middle of the year; and the 10 days of the *Farvardegan (Muktad)* at the end of the year. The Zarathushtrian who observes these festivals at their right time in nature succeeds in catching their beatific energies, which he then assimilates within his spiritual body, strengthening the Gav residing therein. The strengthened Gav, in turn passes on its life sustaining powers to the Azda, which in turn supercharges every atom of the physical body.

The real universalism of the Zarathushtrian religion can be understood by the practice of having public Jashans of Meherangan in the times of the Zarathushtrian monarchy. These intense ceremonies succeeded in turbo charging the beatific energies which

descended on that day, and spread them to every corner of the Zarathushtrian empire. Universalism cannot be equated with conversion. The real universalism of the Zarathushtrian faith lies in its quality of spreading the beatific energies of Ahura Mazda to every person, being and institution, regardless of race or religion. That is the true import of Zarathushtrian ritual. The ancient Zarathushtrian emperors of the Peshdadian, Kyanian, Achaemenian and Sassanian dynasties understood this great fact, which is why they organised extensive celebrations during the festivals of Meherangan and Jamshedi Navroze. They lived and ruled as true enlightened beings, which is why they are remembered even today with respect and awe. Perhaps it is time the modern day Zarathushtrians adopted them as role models.

**Primary source:**

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