

# FIRE - WORSHIP

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We, Zoroastrians, are no doubt worshippers of one God, Ahura Mazda, but we should not deny ourselves of fire worship, rather be proud of it. Fire worship is not the idolatory worship in the sense that the physical fire, which we ignite by physical means, is the god, which we worship. Fire worship on the spiritual plane of worship is one of the noblest means of approach to Ahura Mazda. That Fire, which we truly worship, or we are supposed to worship, is not the physical fire, but lying in the innermost depth of this it is the Divine Fire, which a true devotee and worshipper perceives as a Divine Aspect of Ahura Mazda. It is truly ATHRO AHURAHE MAZDAO PUTHRA, as mentioned in Atash Niyāish — Fire, Son of Ahura Mazda.

To the ignorant ones, who are denied of Divine or spiritual consciousness and conception, it is the physical fire which the Zoroastrians worship; but to a spiritually awakened soul the Spark of Divinity is conceived or perceived while praying before Atash Dadgah or Atash Adaran or Atash Behram, and in that spiritual conception he worships his beloved Ahura Mazda.

True worship is a devotional worship of concentration and meditation and not mere parrot-like uttering of some words. Worship is an act of fixation of mind on Godliness in the midst of worldly deviations and its underlying function lies in the awakening of spiritual faculties, lying dormant in the worshipper. For an average worshipper Ahura Mazda in his impersonal aspect is difficult to meditate upon, and he needs help of a physical form to get concentration. Physical fire is, therefore, offered as a symbol of Ahura Mazda to facilitate proper worship. Let the eyes concentrate on the physical fire,

but let the heart love and the mind think and meditate upon Ahura Mazda deep within this fire.

Once on penetrating into the depth of inner man during meditation it was found by a spiritual aspirant that there are different states of existence of fire and also that man has within him different layers of consciousness and each layer, when awakened, manifest a different state of existence of fire. As a worshipper rises in his inner growth of spirituality, his different layers of inner consciousness get awakened and then he gradually perceives different states of fire. Within the physical fire he perceives the Spiritual Fire. Within the Spiritual Fire he becomes divinely awakened to get glimpses of Divine Fire.

From these glimpses he gets enlightened of the Divine Fire as being the source, the very process and the pillar of all creations. The whole world or rather the whole universe and even the heavenly existence rest on the Divine Fire. What is described as Athro Ahurahe Mazdao Puthra, he perceives that Athro as the Divine Shakti, through which all creations, heavenly or earthly, came into existence. He perceives this Athro as emanating from Ahura Mazda through Asha, the third Ameshaspand — the Divine Immutable Law, the Law of all laws of creation and the root and basis of all creations. This Divine Shakti is also the source of all kinds of working within all creations. He also perceives this Athro as his innermost existence, that is, the Divine Existence.

Spiritual Fire emanates from the Divine Fire and it is the fire of Urwan, the Soul, and is the fire of all spirituality in man. It is the individual spark of the one universal Divine Spark. It is the source of all spiritual enlightenment and wisdom. It governs the spiritual path of the long evolutionary existence of Urwan.

Abstract fire emanates from the Spiritual Fire. It is the source of heat, energy and light of

the physical fire It governs the laws of nature and natural phenomena. In man it is the source of intellectual and psychological enlightenment. It also bears the torch of morality.

Physical fire emanates from the abstract fire and the world or rather the universe emanates from the physical fire. It is also the source of preservation of the world and of the physical structures and objects of the world. According to the Hindu Shastras it is the third of the five Mahabhootas and is called Tej.

Thus we can have some idea or at least some intellectual knowledge of what Fire really is. This knowledge helps us to adopt proper attitude or approach to Holy Fire during worship. Holy Fire truly blesses a true devotee as per the awakening of one or other layer of inner consciousness and as per the approach of a devotee. It has its own way of blessing. Five worship brings flashes of inner enlightenment, clarity of thoughts, deeper and clearer understanding, purity of character with deepening of devotion and also flashes of foretelling and forewarning of coming events of importance. In the Hindu Shastras other name of Agni Deva is Jat Veda, which means one from which enlightenment of Vedas emerged.

While writing about the blessings, mention of a spiritual experience of an aspirant while praying before the Altar of Fire at Agiary will be of interest here. While being deeply engrossed in fire worship he suddenly and unexpectedly observed rays of light projecting out of the Holy Fire and proceeding towards a worshipper who was praying before the Altar at a distance of about 10 feet, and the projected rays were observed entering into the person of the worshipper, who and others at the Agiary appeared unaware and ignorant of what happened. Besides this, the spiritual aspirant had other experiences during his sadhana, confirming a definite relationship existing between a true worshipper and the Holy Fire. It can also be said of the Holy Fire that it has its own language or way of expression and

this it makes known to the sincere and devoted worshipper. Of course, it has got to be mentioned that no worship is to be done for seeking blessings and benefits of any kind but only for the love of Ahura Mazda. If sought, then seek only Divine enlightenment as to be with and near Ahura Mazda. A Sanskrit Havan Mantram uttered during Hoama Kriya relates "O Agni Deva, guide my path to Divine enlightenment even during darkness of my sleep or death".

In connection with the relationship existing between the Holy Fire and a pious worshipper a mention of an incident in the life of Dastur Naryosang Dhaval will be of interest. Fire produced by the lightning in the sky and gathered from a burning object on the ground forms one of the 16 kinds of fire of Atash Behram. Dasturji through his strength of spirituality and purity produced lightning in the sky and drew it down on the ground to ignite a fire from it. Another mention is made here in this connection. In Hindu Shastras there are certain vedic Mantrams in connection with certain Yajna Kriya, which when properly performed, can ignite fire in the Havan Kunda (Place where fire is ignited for worship) without any physical help.

To seek enlightenment of such abstract happening let us penetrate into the abstract existence. Just as air spreads all over the world including inside of an individual being, so also the abstract or spiritual fire, which lies within the physical fire, spreads everywhere including inside of an individual being. When the inner Fire within the worshipper is awakened, the awakened Fire projects out of the worshipper to the extent of projection which is in accordance to the strength of his spiritual growth and to the degree of purity and devotion in him. The projected inner Fire of the worshipper then comes in contact with the abstract fire existing at the place where physical fire is to be ignited and this contact ignites the fire. Lightning in the sky is also a physical fire. Yajna Mantram and Kriya produce a certain kind of Shakti which can awaken inner spiritual or Divine Fire within man. The awakened inner

Fire then projects itself out of the man to ignite the physical fire on coming in contact with the abstract fire at the Havan Kunda, where Yajna Kriya is performed.

Relationship does exist between the Holy Fire and the worshipper. The Holy Fire in fact lies not only in the fire of the Altar, but also within man, and fire worship helps to awaken the Holy Fire lying dormant in the worshipper. On rising step by step the awakening of the spiritual Fire leads to the awakening of the Divine Fire lying dormant in the worshipper and ultimately to the Unity with Ahura Mazda in Divine consciousness. Among various Sadhanas in Yoga

the Sadhana in relation to the fire worship stands outstanding.

Fire worship is a valuable gift which the larger Aryan community and particularly the Zoroastrian section have got from the respective Aryan religions and Zoroastrians should gladly, readily and with deep devotion accept this form of approach to Ahura Mazda. On penetrating deep within the outer physical fire let one and all worship the Divine Fire and be spiritually awakened to Its Divine blessings and grace of enlightenment, wisdom, high morality and nobility.

— Dr. Jal K. Wadia