FIRE WORSHIP

We Zoroastrians are universally known as "Atesh Parasts", Fire Worshippers. Is anything wrong or objectionable in a monotheistic, nonidolatory worshipping Religion like ours? It is a mistake to suppose so, which many do, and in the absence of religious knowledge. The Fire which we worship, or are supposed to worship, is not the physical fire but the Divine Fire, which lies in its innermost depth the spark of Ahu (who is known as Shaedane Shaed), it is the primeval cause of creation, a Divine Aspect of Ahura Mazda. It is truly. ATHRO ARU-RAHE MAZDAO PUTHRA, as mentioned in Atash Niyaesh - Son of Ahura Mazda. Why son? A son is always the one to carry on his father's work with complete obedience without any questions or conditions. (This may not be true now but it used to be so in ancient times, when we were more spiritually civilized). The work-is to burn up all the impurities and transmute evil into good and thus take the entire creation towards the one far — of event FAR-SHOKERETI — merging into Him in the end!

Fire enjoys most prominent place in Zoroastrianism; it is also important (in an obstruse way) in all the Religions of the world. It is the Cause of Creation. It is the beginning and will be the end. It is the cause of everything. Everything is through Atesh — even salvation. In fire, there is Nature, God's motion. It permeates every cell, every atom in the universe. It is present in air, water, earth, animals, men. every article, visible or invisible. It is the present in air, water, earth, animals, men, every article, visible or invisible. It is the Source, the very process, the Pillar of all Creation. Let us emphatically then reiterate that fire worship is the noblest means of approach to God and that "Atesh-Parasti is Yazdan Parasti."

Ahura Mazda is the infinite and intangible Spirit, whilst our limited consciousness is at present attuned, only to the tangible. Therefore we revere Ahura Mazda through the brightest, the most beneficient and grandest of his manifestations, the two most magnificent embodiments of His glory — 'HVARE KSHAETA' the Glorious Sun, and ATAR - KHVAREH the Radiant fire! Therefore when you pray before a fire, 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.

There are different states of existence of fire, and man has within him different layers of consciousness and each layer, when awakened, manifests a different state of existence of fire. As a devotee rises in his spiritual growth, his different layers of inner consciousness get awakened and then he gradually perceives different states of fire. Thus he awakens the Divine fire which is a spark of the one Universal Divine Spark, which governs the spiritual path of the long evolutionary existence of (Urvan) the soul.

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Regd Office: 111, Trapinex House, 1st Floor, Sholapur Street, Bombay 400 009. Fire 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, not to mention the innumerable blessings the devotee is showered with. It can also be said of the Holy Fire that it has its own language or way of expression which it makes known, to the sincere and devoted worshipper.

Let me mention a spiritual experience of an aspirant, while praying before the Altar of Fire at Agiary. 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 ten feet, The projected rays were observed entering into the person of the worshipper who (and others at the Agiary) appeared to be unaware and ignorant of what had 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.

Dasturji Nairyosangh Dhaval, through the strength of his purity produced fire by the lightening in the sky and drew it down on the ground on a pile of wood and ignited fire. This was part of the preparation of the great fire (Iranshah) at Udwada.

Dasturji Meherji Rana, who expounded our great religion to the Emperor Akbar at Agra in 1579 AD, also lit up Fire by Manthra. In Hindu Shastras, there are certain vedic Mantrams in connection with certain Yazna Kriya, which when properly performed, can ignite fire in the Havan Kunda, without any physical help. There is an uninterrupted tradition, down the ages of time, that the Athravan Priest could light fire by Sound; and so could the Magis.

The ancient Aryans wisely refrained from defining the Supreme Reality, God or AHU since it "transcends the range and reach of

thought" the transcedental is often wrapped in garbs of mystery, hence is inconceivable to our finite minds. Also, since we have lost the intuitive understanding our wise ancestors possessed, a very concise and superficial presentation has been attempted by me of this vast subject ... and yet if doubt still lurks in some questioning minds, there is ample material on the subject — take a dip into the exhilarating waters, (do be suitably equipped) but please please dear Zoroastrians, do not deny a privilege you can be so proud of as an Aryan, as a Mazdayesnan as a Zarthoshti — to be a Fire-Worshipper!

ATESH NIYAESH

Now we shall flash some thought forces behind the Avesta meanings in Atesh Niyaesh. The paragraph દ્વા માઇ હજારેવા is very powerful & translates as "O Ahura, raise me to a height of piety and rescue me from the claws of evil. Give me strength, humility, tolerance and selflessness like Armaity (ability to sacrifice for the sake of others) and the desire to fulfill your wish most happily.

"O Ahura teach me to look within myself...
to arrest the evil and enhance the good qualities so I may reach that which is beyond the finite curtain of Your Will (which is clouded in mystery); and enjoy the bliss of Bahman and Sharivar's blessings and satisfaction of fulfilling, your wish thus attaining everlasting happiness. O progressive Spenta Armaitti! With the strength of your piety, reveal to me the knowledge of my religion.

"Asho Zarathushtra had offered and dedicated (special) body, life soul, his highly advanced spiritual status to Mazda and to Bahman Ameshaspand; for the one great far off event, FARSHOKERETI; his entire rewards of piety and good deeds to Ardibehesht Ameshaspand; his holy thoughts words and deeds which were always attuned to the Yazadas and Ameshaspands, the vibrations of which he could hear through Sarosh Yazad and make it known to the others — all that he had offered with com-

plete obedience to Sharivar Amshaspand. In the same way and for the same cause, do we aspire to offer our humble prayers to Bahman, Ardibehesht, Sharivar and Sarosh, so that Faroshokereti comes soon".

By uttering these words the stoatic vibrations thus produced, quicken the motion in the atesh before which a devotee prays, and that of his own body; and the very essence of Dadar Ahura Mazda's fire which is dormant in all the physical ateshs on earth, is activated and is drawn out in full for which in turn establishes a connection with all fires and binds them into a righteous knot of His Fire "Athro Puthre Ahuramazda." Thus the physical fires are somewhat purified and are attracted to the spiritual world. Great abed sahebs of the Sahebe Dilan ignited fire from mere pieces of wood and sandalwood by reciting these prayers on every Jamshedi Navroz Day! Such magical words of that particular para in Atesh Niyaesh activate God's Fire essence, in the fire in the devotee's body, and in the physical fire before which the devotee prays.

O thou who are permeated in the entire creation, a yazad of great beauty and bestower of great beauty, one who (full of wisdom) is instumental in fulfilling God's will, O Atesh, a million billion trillion salutations to you from a Mazdeyasnie Zarthoshti!

"Atarsh Puthra Ahurahe Mazdao.
Saoche buye ahmya nmane!
Mat saoche buye ahmya nmane!
RAOCHAHI buye ahmya nmame!
Upa surnam Frasho — Keretim!"
(Atash Niyaish, 1, 3).

"O Fire, Son of Ahura Mazda!....
"Mayest Thou (Fire Farn-Bagh?) Burn in this house!

Mayest Thou (Fire Gushnasp?) ever burn in this house

Mayest thou (Fire Burzen-Mihr?) GLOW in this house

Until the mighty Perfection of the World!"

- Silloo Mehta