

PRACTICALS OF OUR RELIGION

RULES FOR VISITING ATASH BEHERAM OR AGIARY

1. What is Atash Padshah?

We Parsis have an inherent affinity and attraction towards Atash i.e. Fire. In all ceremonies and rites like Navjote, Navar, Afringaan, Yazashney etc. fire is required to be present. We have, then, eight 'Atash-Beheram's between Bombay and Surat and numerous 'Aderaans' or 'Agiari's all over India, wherever Parsis live or lived. We commonly call them Fire-Temples. **Atash-Kadeh** is a better word. It means a sacred place or building where the Holy Fire is enthroned. We call such enthroned Fire, **Padshah Saheb**.

He is a living, conscious Divine Entity having spiritual power and authority. He has a divine function to perform on you and the world around you. He is your Divine Friend. He is anxious for your spiritual progress during your life on the earth, where you are a pilgrim for a short period. You are the subject, the citizen, of His Divine Kingdom.

VISITING A ROYALTY

Now when you visit an Atash-Kadeh, you have to follow certain rules for presenting yourself before the Divine Padshah, whether He is the Iranshah of Udwada or any of the seven Atesh Beheram's or any of the Aderaans Sahebs. You cannot just walk in any manner you like.

To follow and understand these Rules of the Divine Royalty, we must first have some idea about *the Divine Science of Atesh*, as revealed in our Daena. (Religion).

ENERGIES AND MOTIONS - FROM DIVINE TO THE PHYSICAL

The world around us is not just a bunch of accidents. It is designed and created by Ahura Mazda and it does not come to an end where our senses cease to register it or our intellect fails to be conscious of it. There are unseen and unknown Regions in Nature which can be revealed to us only through our following the Path shown by Daena, every moment of our life.

This creation of Ahura started with the First Divine Sound, a serene fountain of divine vibrations called Ahoonvar or Ahaona Vairya. It set into motion the process of Creation. The first ever divine motion or energy is termed as "Athra" or "Aatar" or "Aatesh". This is not the Aatesh or fire of our earthly experience. *It is the First Emanation of Divine Energy from Ahura, and is the origin of all motions and all energies.* It is therefore called "Athra Ahurahey Mazdaao Puthra", the son of Ahura Mazda.

LEVELS OF DIVINITY

This first divine Energy Flux takes up various forms and frequencies. Various channels of its Divine Light pour down as the Universe goes on to be created. These are described as different kinds of 'Atash'. They have different frequencies and different contents of divinity. On our earth, it takes the forms of diverse kinds of motions and energies. There are mysterious motions in the smallest particle of matter, in the smallest seed of a plant and in the smallest animal living on the earth. Various forms of energies are experienced by us during our lives. *All these motions and energies - from Athra Ahurahey Mazdaao Puthra down upto the particle of matter are the manifestations of the Divine Fire of Ahura.* In other words, every thing, physical, non-physical or divine has the spark of Divine Fire in it, with varying contents of divinity. The sparks in physical things have varying degrees of suppressed or hidden divinity. This can however be awakened or invoked by certain "Yasna" i.e. divine procedures prescribed by Asho Zarathushtra and His authorised Deputies. In the Holy Padshah Sahebs in our Atash Kadeh's, the Divine sparks are ignited and awakened in different levels, after carrying our certain marathon rites and procedures. These levels of divinity are different in Atash Beheram's, Aderaans and Daadgah's.

POWER STATIONS OF DIVINE ENERGY

On the physical earth of our experience, Iranshah at Udwada has the highest level of the Divine Athra or Atash. The other seven Atash Beheram's have slightly lower level. Aderaans Sahebs in Agiaries have still lower level. Each, however, is a divine King of a stature, much higher than any ordinary fire.

COMBAT WITH EVIL FORCES

These Holy Atash in the Atash Kadeh's have two fold divine function. One consists of cutting out the subtle

unseen clouds of pollution, which in the present times surround the whole atmosphere of the earth. These clouds are formed out of the evil thoughts, words and deeds of the humans. Padshah Saheb emanates powerful currents of spiritual energy which combat the evil forces and augment the white forces.

LORD OF YOUR FAITH AND KARMA

The second function of Padshah Saheb relates directly to YOU. Now, who are you? (No offence meant). You are passing through this earthly life as a part of your journey towards Ahura. To reach Him is our aim. That has taken us through various stages of spiritual evolution and through several lives. You have certain 'Karma' to carry out and discharge. 'Karma' means, loosely, your destiny. Many events in your life are destined. They are the results of your past actions. ***But one thing you can do, whatever your destiny may be; and that is: have FAITH in your Daena and DEVOTION towards Asho Zarathushtra.*** Then, you will have peace of mind and bliss in your heart, howsoever strong the storms in your life be. The function of Atash Padshah is to inspire that **FAITH and DEVOTION** within you.

He is the Lord of your Karma. If you endeavour and exert to follow and practice the commands of our Daena in all your dealings with all people and all nature around you, and you comply with the spiritual disciplines assigned to you, (like Sudreh Kushti, Manthra Prayers, Kriya kaam), Padshah Saheb will help you to deliver yourself from the petty earthly and material turmoils and to hasten your journey towards Ahura.

"WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT TO ME?"

When you present yourself before the Padshah Saheb, please remember that He sees you through and through. He expects a gift from you, - the gift of your Faith, Devotion and compliance with the commands prescribed in the Daena. ***"Have you brought to me, the fragrance of your GOOD deeds? Or are you coming to me with your hands polluted by BAD deeds?", the Padshah Saheb asks." In either case, He says "I will lead you to your deliverance and to Ahura Mazda; but if your deeds are good, I will do so with my fragrant blessings; if your deeds are bad I will do so through punishment.*** So tell me, what you, who are my "walking" friend, have brought for me, your "sitting" friend? If your gift to me is your white deeds, I will give you "the food of the daylight". If your deeds are black, I will give you "the food of the night". In either case I will be your Guiding Light to lead you to Ahura."

"WE ARE FRIENDS"

We are all the Padshah Saheb's "walking" friends. We are walking through the devilish wilderness of this world. We are made to walk and run helter skelter by our Karma. But the Padshah Saheb is 'sitting' on His divine throne, and emanates his light of fire on us. If our deeds are good, they will emanate fragrance; if bad, foul smell. He however will manage both. "Food of the day light" is your pleasant Karma"; "food of the night" is your painful Karma. He alchemises both.

The above dialogue between the Padshah Saheb and you is narrated in Atash Niyایش, which is required compulsorily to be recited whenever you stand before Him.

So, my reader friend, you see that going to Agiary is not a symbolic and routine act. It is a spiritual discipline and exercise. You must understand the divine stature and function of the Padshah Saheb and tune your mind with the thoughts of His divine stature and function.

DIVINE PURITY IN A POLLUTED WORLD

But that alone is not adequate. There are other rules of physical purity to be complied with BEFORE presenting yourself before Him. Padshah Saheb is a divine entity in a polluted world, a ray of divine light in devil's darkness. A lot of exertion has gone into His consecration. An Atash-Kadeh is like an insulated ice factory in the midst of scorching heat. It is extremely fine-tuned and requires great care to preserve its divine purity and power.

THE RULES

The first rule is that you must not, by your own personal impurity, disturb the fine-tuning. Therefore, it is necessary to have a bath before visiting the Atash Kadeh, and reach it by walking if you can. Before entering you must do a Kushti in the proper way. (See Parsi Pukar of July 1995 - Vo1.1, 1 for the rules of doing a Kushti).

If a bath immediately before going to Atash Kadeh or walking down is not possible, better do Kushti three times, one after the other, after reaching there.

Doing Kushti serves two purposes. One is to purify your personality and the other to invoke spiritual energy within you. This is the preparation to face the Divine Royalty.

One essential point here. ***The bottom of your Sudreh must be loose-falling on or towards your knees. Your shirt and Sudreh must not be tucked in the trouser or in any other way.*** This applies to male and female both. It is a yogic rule that Sudreh must be out. This has something to do with certain energy centers (Chakhra's) within you. If you keep your Sudreh tucked, there will be obstacles in the release of energy and your prayers will not be as effective as they should be.

After the Kushti, the next step - please note - is ***to recite Sarosh Baaj, Geh, Khroshed Niyaiash and Meher Niyaiash at any place OUTSIDE THE INNER ROOM of the Padshah Saheb preferably facing the sun.*** You can recite the other two Niyaiash's viz. Mah Bokhtar and Avan Ardisoor, if you want to, but that too outside the inner room. If it is night time (before 12 midnight), Sarosh Baaj, Aivisruthrem Gah and Mahbokhtaar Niyaiash may be recited, but again outside the inner room.

These Niyaiash prayers invoke in you sufficient spiritual energy to make you fit to offer your humble presence to the Padshah Saheb.

If you are short of time, do Kushti and recite Sarosh Baaj and Gaah, and then enter the inner room. But surely you can find 20 minutes in a long day of 24 hours to recite at least Khorshed and Meher Niyaiash's in the day time. You can pray them at home even, after Kushti, Sarosh Baaj and Gah; then go to Atash Kadeh, do Khushti, Sarosh Baaj and Geh, and enter the inner room.

Before the Padshah Saheb, while kneeling on the threshold of the innermost room, ***the ladies should NOT take their purses and place them on the threshold.*** Your purses accompany you at all times and in all conditions (including M.C.) and are not pure enough.

"NEARER TO THEE MY LORD"

While presenting yourself to Padshah Saheb, fill up your heart with devotion for Him, attune yourself with Him, fill up your mind with the thoughts of His divine stature and function, with love and compassion for everybody and every thing. No hatred for anyone; no selfishness; a feeling of peace and bliss and of submitting to Ahura Mazda's wish and will, howsoever strong the storms of your life may be. Then recite Atash Niyaiash. (I shall, at some other time explain to you the content, meaning and EFFECT of Atash Niyaiash).

"STRENGTHEN ME IN FAITH"

What do you ask from Padshah Saheb? Just this: ***"Oh Padshah Saheb! I am no angel. I have fallen into sin several times. I have often been swept away in the currents of evil thoughts, words and deeds. You Saheb, know all that. Whatever I have done, good or bad, You are going to work on it and lead me through the circuitous path of my Karma, my destiny, towards Ahura Mazda.*** Give me inspiration and strength to follow the teachings, tenets and tarikats of my Daena and inflame me with the inner fire of love and devotion towards Ahura, His Yazatic Messenger - Asho Zarathushtra,- and all the divine Energies of Yazata's operating in Ahura's Creation".

SHOULD WE ASK FOR WORLDLY THINGS?

Padshah Saheb is the King and Lord of your Destiny. We are His subjects. Have we not a right to at least to ASK for worldly things, and to crave for a relief from the pains of life? "I am poor, Oh Padshah, give me sufficient to enable me to look after my family". "My dear one is so ill, please cure him". "So and so harasses me, inspire him not to do that". It is for the Padshah to decide whether or how far your entreaties should be granted. His first anxiety is to drive you and evolve you on the Path of Ahura. It is for Him to determine how far your prayer for worldly thing will, if granted, evolve you further. ***So, do ask, but leave it into His divine hands to give.*** If he does not grant it, don't think he is not merciful or just to you. He has to balance His mercy and compassion for you with your Karmic reactions.

MIRACLES DO HAPPEN

But this has been observed by thousands of Parsis all over the globe: Padshah Saheb does help. He gives. If he does not give, He infuses in you the strength to bear the storm and come out of it gracefully. Have unflinching Faith in Iranshah and whatever Padshah Saheb, you are attracted to. Iranshah is the Supreme Lord of all Padshah Sahebs enthroned in any Atash Kadeh, duly consecrated and preserved and protected according to the Rules ordained in the Daena.

Those who are far way from Iranshah or any other Padshah Saheb, should not be disheartened. Divine Entities have no bondage of space and time. Just think of Him, light a Divaa (ghee or oil lamp), do Kushti, and other prayers as stated above, and an Atash Niyais. He has received your message and prayer. I assure you, several Parsis have experienced miraculous answer to their Prayers to Atash Padshah Saheb thousands of miles away.

- Cheraag

(Parsi Pukar – SEPTEMBER 1995 Vol. 1; No.3)