

# Navroz Function At Cincinnati (U.S.A.)

## A Lecture Demonstration on Navroz - 'Hafta-Shin' - Table and Jashan

[ZAKOI, The Zarathushtrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana is founded for the Parsis residing in those three states of U.S.A. Ronny Jal Sadri of Louisville is the President. His wife Kashmira Sadri is the Secretary. Zavera Jamshed Kanga of Lexington is the treasurer. The Association is just five months old. The aim is to establish and preserve the social contacts amongst the Parsis of the three neighbouring States and more importantly to make their children conversant with the religion and culture of the Parsis. Bakhtavar and Fred Desai of Cincinnati are the active participants in this behalf. Monthly meetings and children's classes constitute an important part of the activities of Zakoi.

The Association held its first Navroze function on 21st March 1999 at Cincinnati. Catered Indian and Parsi oriented food was ordered. A lot of fun activities were planned for the children and elders. From 12 noon to 5.30 p.m. the rented hall vibrated with mirth and frolic from more than 70 Parsis and a few Americans too. The children had a fully enjoyed day. Their shouts and running around adorned the meet.

I, your editor happened to be in Louisville at my daughter, Kashmira Sadri's home. All the Zarthoshti Iranis and many Parsis have the custom of arranging a Navroz table on 21st March. Certain articles beginning with the letter 'Shin' of the Farsi language (English 'Sh') are spread out on the table. I gave a helping hand in preparing the table according to the tradition mainly followed by our Irani sisters and brothers. With a view to give an elementary idea of the Zarthoshti Din and its spiritual Institutions, I had added a few more things on the table, which was displayed at the function. Immediately after lunch and before the games and funfare, I explained the sense and significance of each item on the table as added, and also the traditional "Shin" items. Thinking that it will provide some interesting materials and thoughts to our readers, here is a report of a few highlights of the 45 minutes talk on the subject.]

I began in a seemingly serious but inherently mischievous tone: "Friends! What are the elements of our Zoroastrian culture which should be preserved for the survival of the Parsi community?" The secretary of the Association, Kashmira Sadri started worrying. Was this fellow - the father of mine - going to touch some controversial subjects?

"A poll was taken on this question", I continued, "and the majority view was: **The Zoroastrian Food**". The element for Parsi survival : Dhanshaak and Dar-ni-pori! The audience laughed. Kashmira was relieved, so also I. Yes, the group-liked humour. All Parsis do-more in America than India.

Friends! I come from India, where Iranshah at Udwarda and other Holy 'Atashes' are burning and spreading Ahura's -divine Light. I bring their blessings to all and each of you.

What is Navroz? It is the day on which the sun enters the first of the twelve constellations - Meysh Rashi. It is the New-year-day for the sun and earth both. The Zarathushtrian Science reveals that during the ten days preceding Navroz, certain white forces of Nature come down on earth and give it a bath, a Nahan, Bareshnoom. This is to cleanse away all the unseen clouds of pollution accumulated during the year. They are generated and conglutated by the evil thoughts, words and deeds of the humans. We see how rampant they are.

The Nature i.e. Ahuramazda gives a special treatment to this earth and these fragile humans and other kingdoms of His Creation on it : the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral - seemingly non-living matter.

The Earth is something of a miracle. Its optimum distance from the sun, the precise velocities of its rotations and revolutions, its fantastic spiral motion in space at the rate of 410 kms per second, its air and water and amazing creatures are not a matter of just coincidences. To think so is too egoistic to be true. Too many coincidences proclaim a design and declare a designer. Verily it seems God has created Earth and the living and seemingly non-living things on it for a particular set aim. The Zarathushtrian Science reveals that

Earth is the center of the spiritual - not Darwinian - evolution and a way to the final Liberation, Mukti, Narvana, Frashogard of the whole universe, seen and unseen. It is created with that aim. All the blessings and bounties and boons and gifts of our day-to-day life on this earth are showered on us with that aim.

Today on the Navroz-day, when the earth has its bath and "Nahan" and is now ready to start its new year and fresh journey towards Ahura mazda, we remember Him and thank Him for all His blessings and bounties. The tradition of spreading the Navroz table has that idea as its basis.

The tradition is to arrange certain things in certain order on the table. God's bounties are too many to be compressed on a table. A scanty selection is to be made. The Irani-Parsi tradition is to select seven things beginning with the Persian letter "Shin".

[I am wondering why the letter 'shin' is selected. In mystical science of incantation, spells and charms called 'Dawah' in Islam, each letter is associated, amongst other things, with one of the four elements, Atash (Fire), Baad (Air), Aab (Water) and Khaak (Earth) and also with a planet. There, the element of the letter 'shin' is stated to be Fire and the Planet, Moon. Fire in Zarathushtrian Science is the root energy of all the motions physical, mental, spiritual in Ahuramazda's Creation. For us, Fire is a special object of worship and we have a science of increasing the coefficient of divinity in various kinds of Fire. That is how our Atash Baheram's and Adran's are made and consecrated.

Moon - the manifestation of Mah Yazat is the Lord of Destiny and Liberation both. It is therefore, called Bakhta-yar the Lord of 'bakhta' - destiny and Bohhtar - the Lord of Bokhtagi (Mukti), in the Zarathushtrian Science.

The moon brings destiny and the Fire gives motion to everything. May be, the letter 'shin' is selected for some such reason.]

(Note: The bracketed Note above and others below were not spoken at the Zakoi function on 21-3-1999. They are inserted as additional information to fill up the gaps, generated due to want of time).

Before I go to the shin-articles, I will say something about the additional things I have displayed on this table. The aim is to give you some idea of certain elementary teachings of all Religions in general and our Zarthoshti Din in particular. The additional articles are the representatives of, firstly, the four kingdoms of Creation, and secondly, the four 'Anasar's i.e. the non-physical elements named as Atash, Baad, Aab, Khaak.

Taking first the four kingdoms on our Earth, the first is the human kingdom. A huge mass of humanity is tossed around on the earth. Although they are one species, each human is different from the other. The thumb print is different, the genetic constitution is different, [the arrangement of neurons in the brain is different, even though two of them may be identical twins - natural or Doly-cloned.] And then there are Prophets and Saints and Sages and Seers of all Religions, who are entirely different from the common mass. So here on this table, the first article is a metal carving of Asho Zarathushtra and Shah Lohraspa with a holy Fire between them. Here is one of Ahura's men who is appointed as our Guide, Guru and Teacher - the Paigamber Asho Zarathushtra. Shah Lohraspa is the father of the King Vishtaspa, one of the first disciples of the Paigamber. Shah Lohraspa has a high spiritual stature; but I don't enter into that.

The second thing here on this table is a large pictorial book on "World Religions". I have placed it as a part of the human kingdom. Avesta holy Scriptures have in terms declared that all Religions flow from the divine Plan of Ahura. [The word "Daenaao" is used in Gatha - Yazashney Haa 31-11, 33-13, 34-13, 46-6, 49-9; Yazashney Haa 19 refers to five centers of different Religions].

Every Religion declares the truth of God. God does not send His Prophets with inconsistent truths. The apparent contradictions arise from our ignorance. Truth is a many-coloured and many - splendored thing. It is expressed in different words, ideas, concepts and pictures. If you go deeper in them, you will hear God's harmony in them. Anybody who says, my Religion and my Prophet are better than yours, does not know what he is talking about. Have profound respect for all Religions and stick to your own. Try to harmonise the truths depicted in different Religions and you will end in loving every human being and every element of God's

creation. So, the book here represents our respect and love for all Religions. [I would ask : which is more Parsi like: declaring with hollow pomp and pride that our Religion is superior to others OR to have respect for all Religions, to try to explore other Religions in our quest for truth and follow our own? "I am showing you certain principles and doctrines taught into the Hindu Scriptures so that you may become better Christians", said Swami Vivekanand when he was alleged to try to convert Christians to Hindus. One of the best books I have come across is "Good Heart" with a wonderfully peaceful sub-title "A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus", in which there is a report of Dalai Lama reading and interpreting seven passages from the Bible in the light of Buddhist Doctrines, in a 1994 seminar in London organised by the world community for Christian Meditation in memory of John Main, the Irish Benedictine Monk, who taught meditation. (Wisdom Publications - Boston - 1996).]

Here is the third article, a trophy belonging to my grandson Zubin Sadri. It is the small metallic bust of a basket ball player. This represents our common humanity which is made to play with life to score a basket after several jumpings and runnings. Remember, the rules of this sport of life are prescribed by the Prophets.

Here I finish the human kingdom and enter the amazing world of animals. Here is a carved metal horse, then a small laughing cow, a toy-bird eagle, a fish and Kangaroo in soft toys. The horse in mystical science is a symbol of the strength of the soul and its energy to ride swiftly towards Ahuramazda. The great souls who have attained certain high spiritual stature have 'aspa' (Avesta and Persian for horse), like the King Vishtaspa; Paurushaspa, Asho Zarathushtra's father; Paiteraspa, Haichataspa, his ancestors

Cow is the symbol of love, meekness, a disposition to give away and not to snatch away, a manifestation of Bahman Ameshaspend.

A bird is a most wonderful creation. It sings and flies and migrates. Many a saints like Ramkrishna Paramhansa had their first mystical experience when their eyes fell on a flock of birds. The Zarathushtrian science reveals that the morning melodies of the birds have a soothing vibratory effect, which generates certain devotional currents in the air. The song of a bird is the external manifestation of Ahura's Ahoonvar and the vibrations of Sarosh Yazad.

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### SIGNIFICANCE AND MESSAGE OF THE ARTICLES PLACED ON NAVROZ TABLE.

[In the last Issue of this humble Parsi Pukar, a part report of the Navroz function held at Cincinnati on 21.3.99 was published. The function was under the auspices of Zakoi - the Zarathushtrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. I, your editor, happened to be in Louisville (Kentucky), the headquarter of the Association, and gave a talk - a sort of lecture demonstration on Navroz table and Jashan. The following is the remaining highlights of the talk - **Editor**)

The third kingdom of God is Vegetation. Here on this table is placed a small plant. An amazing dance of photosynthesis is going on within a tree. The main dancing constituents are the sunlight, carbon dioxide molecules, water, and chlorophyll. The dance produces carbohydrates which result in the growth of leaves and branches. Carbohydrate is a form of sugar. Thus tremendous sugar factories are going on in a tree. About 300 billion tons of sugar is manufactured in a year in the vegetation on earth. This astounding dance is not fully understood. It is one of the many unsolved mysteries of Nature.

The fourth kingdom is here represented by a metal vessel. In spite of two hundred years of exploration to understand what is inside an atom, the mystery not only remains unsolved but is deepening at every step. The so called elementary particles are found to behave mysteriously. The Zarathushtrian science reveals that beyond all physical matter lie four oceans of very subtle unobservable and hidden energies called 'Anasars'. These are called Atesh (Fire), Baad (Air), Aab (Water) and Khak (Earth). These do not refer to fire, air, water and earth of our experience. They are spiritual energies whirling in higher dimensions. Their rotations, revolutions and condensations result in elementary particles, which in turn condense to form atoms. One of the great scientists David Bohm pointed out that the quantum equations reveal that one cubic centimeter of what we call 'empty' space contains energy, which is more than the energy that can be produced by converting all the matter in the observable universe to energy! It is not easy to understand God's world. The claims of science to have understood it have now come to a bewildering stage. Remember, science is knocking the door of mysticism, but the door does not open, although looking from the peep hole does indicate that something extraordinary goes on, on the other side.

The mystical science of all Religions has revealed that the fire, air, water and earth of our experience are the external physical manifestations of the energies of the four Anasars. Here on this table are placed these external things. Here is a lamp of light. Its flame is dancing and is looking up. It represents the Anasar of subtle Fire energy whirling in God's universe. In the Zarathushtrian Religion, Atash is the root energy of all the motions and movements in the whole creation of Ahuramazda and is called the son of Ahuramazda. Every thing vibrates with the Atashic energy on a certain level of divinity. This level is brought up to a higher spiritual intensity in our Fire temples. Certain spiritual procedures are to be carried out on the ordinary fires to raise their coefficients of divinity.

The second Anasar is Air. I have placed a whistle which can produce a whistling sound when air is blown in it. I would have preferred a flute, but it was not available. The flute of the Universe is played by God's breath. That is why in the great Hindu Religion, Lord Krishna is shown playing a flute in the green pastures. Ahura's music goes around through His breeze.

The third Anasar is water. Here is a glass of water. Water is again an amazing creation. It signifies the cool currents of Ahuramazda's blessings. The Zarathushtrian mystical science has a very large chapter on the origin and function of water at different stages of creation.

The fourth Anasar is earth. Here is a small bag of the earth taken *from* the garden yard. Earth is our mother. We stay here *for* a short period on our way to Ahura mazda and during that period the mother showers all kinds of blessings on us, so that we may live on it comfortably and discharge our duty to God. He has sent us on this earth for a reason and an aim. The aim is to reach Him. For that, we have to follow the Rules sent by Him to us through His Prophets.

These things *from* the *four* kingdoms and *four* Anasars are a special addition to the Navroz table. Through them I wanted to give you a faint idea of Religion in general and the Zarthoshti Religion in particular. I now switch over to the seven things which we traditionally place on the Navroz table, starting with the Persian letter 'Shin'.

The first is 'Shir', the milk, again a God's wonder. In the Zarthoshti Din, the cow has a sacred place. Cow is the manifestation of love and selflessness. Milk is its gift to us. Its whiteness is like a reflection of God's light.

The next is 'Shirini', a sweet preparation. It is better to be sweet in life than spicy. Any good occasion is an excuse for us to eat sweet. Here is a plate of 'Sev'.

The third is 'Sharab'. You know what it is. A drink to take you "in Sarosh's hands". Sarosh is the lord of consciousness and Sharab takes you fast in some apparently divine consciousness though not of Sarosh. This is our Parsi way to present a profound truth through a joke.

The fourth 'Shin' is 'Shamaa', the light. It symbolises the Light of Ahuramazda, His son, Athro Ahuruhey Mazdao Poothra, the divine source of all energies vibrating in every particle of God's creation. In our Atash Behrams and Agiaries the divine spark in the ever burning holy Fire there, is brought to a higher level of divinity.

The next article is 'Shesha'. I am told it means pulses. It perhaps reflects our fondness for Dhanshaak ni Daal. Dhanshaak, in turn, reflects our spicy nature. We use green and dry masalaa's both and a lot of meat. Green chillies perhaps show our outwardly green but inwardly hot disposition. Dry masalas like red chilly powder and Dhanajiroo and Sambar are an open confession of our often quarrelsome habit. But to our great credit we become sugary and very good after a quarrel; because the next and sixth item on the table is "Shekhar" i.e. sugar. We have seen that photosynthesis in plants are sugar factories. Pulses are a vegetable product. So it is a chain: pulses, photosynthesis, green chillies, chlorophyll, Dhanshaak, hot & spicy and at last sugar. All spicy taste in the mouth disappears and we are back on the auspicious table.

The last seventh 'Shin' is 'Shishe', mirror. That is significantly Parsi. It is said that we are very friendly, we meet often; but within minutes we start arguing; that if 2 Parsis meet, the number of views on one subject is six; each has three views often contradictory; and that if there is nobody to argue, the Parsi will argue with his (or her) own image in the mirror. Perhaps, that is why the mirror is the seventh item, the ending item. We do begin with Shir milk, such a sweet thing, then travel to sweets, sugar and ultimately mirror. However, the fact that a Parsi quarrels with his own image in a mirror speaks of one extremely good quality: he (or she) has no malice. How can he (or she) have malice against his (or her) own image? So even when he (or she) quarrels with a real human and not an image, he (or she) has no ill feelings towards the other human. That quality is declared hereby on this Navroz table by placing milk first and mirror last.

There is however another aspect to the mirror. Stand before it and quarrel with your image looking at you the Parsi way. Ask him or her, "Hey Mr. or Ms. (as the case may be), how many good things you have done today, and more important, how many bad? I tell you, you don't think yourself to be so great You are good at times, I do agree, but put your hand on your heart and ask how many bad thoughts passed in your mind today? You had a flicker of carnal thought when your eyes fell on that beautiful girl" (vice versa for the fairer sex). "Why were you unduly angry on....? You did hurt somebody's feelings... You wished ill of someone.... Revise yourself..... Do a Kushti right now!....."

So if it is in our nature to quarrel with our own reflection, it will be a spiritual exercise to quarrel with it in this fashion.... Hence the MIRROR.

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I repeat: Friends! I bring to you from India the blessings of the holy Iranshah who is burning since more than a thousand years, at present at Udwada, and all other seven Atashbeherams and several Agiaries. You are brought by your destiny here in this country. Although I am a lawyer, who is the last person to give

blessings, yet in exercise of my right temporarily conferred on me by my Mobedic pagdi at present covering my head, I wish, if not bless, that may you live and thrive here with love towards all your family members, community members, all your non-Parsi friends and neighbours and the whole humanity and all the creations of Ahuramazda. May every day of your life be a Navroz day....

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[It will be interesting for you, my reader, to know that the idea of additional items consisting of four kingdoms and four Anasars was adopted from our rituals and ceremonies - more correctly Kriyakaam. Particularly, in the major Pav-Mahal ceremonies like Yazashney or Vendidaad, 33 'Alaat's are used. Alaat means an object or thing which is made capable of receiving the Yazatic currents from the divine world and then emitting them during the ceremony. These Alaats are 33 in number, and are taken from the four kingdoms and four Anasars. The details of these Alaats will be placed before you my worthy reader, in the new series of articles, on Kriyakaam which has started from the January 1999 issue.

Further, in this report I have omitted the subject of Jashan, since it was just a short demonstration on certain parts of the Jashan ceremony and it is difficult to report it without demonstrating it.]

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### **DAR-NI-PORI**

If somebody does not know our favourite Dar-ni-pori and looks at it, he sees a brownish white or whitish brown thing round in shape. He won't know that the inside is all sweetness - quite different from other sweetness. Only when he cuts it, he sees the yellow soft sweetened 'dar'. That is how Mother Nature behaves with us often. The exterior does not reveal the interior, unless you open it and know how to open it rightly. Knock and it shall be opened to you. But the knock must be a right one. You can't use a bull-dozer to cut the 'Pori'. That is what modern science is doing since last 500 years!

And when one eats the 'Pori', one may suddenly find himself chewing an almond or rasin. Even that was hidden and could be found only on tasting. Devotion to God lying deep in the human heart has to be tasted to know its sweetness. Like the tongue moving to relish the pori, let the heart throb to relish the name of Ahuramazda and Asho Zarathushtra.....

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