

SADEH

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Sadeh is a mid winter festival celebrated by Zarathushtis. It is popularly known as **Jashan-e Sadeh**. In Iran it is the third largest celebration after **Navrooz** and **Mehrgaan**. For some reason, this festival is not celebrated in India.

In Farsi language, **Sad** means hundred. There are several different traditions as to when to celebrate **Sadeh**. In Yazd, the festival is celebrated on Roj *Astad*, Mah *Adar*, which is 100 days before **Navrooz**, the beginning of Spring. This places the festival to be celebrated on December 11th. In Kerman, the festival is celebrated on Roj *Aban*, Mah *Behman*, which is the 100th day after the **Ayathrem** Gahambar, the beginning of winter. Yet others, celebrate it on January 29th, which is 50 days and 50 nights before Navrooz. Most organizaions in US celebrate it on the weekend close to January 29.

In Shahnameh, **Sadeh** is referred to as a celebration of mankind's discovery of generating fire. There is a legend that King Hooshang saw a snake and threw a stone to kill it. The stone missed the snake but hit another rock. The friction between the stones created a spark and a fire. Fire caused by natural phenomena (lightning, volcano, etc) was known to mankind for ages before. However, the importance of King Hooshang's incident seems to be that for the first time, mankind discovered how to create fire at will and control it for practical purpose. This was a big step in the history of human civilization. Hence the tradition of the **Sadeh** celebration.

Traditional celebration of **Sadeh** involves lighting a big fire outdoors. Mobeds perform a **Jashan** ceremony followed by singing and dancing around the fire by the people gathered for the festivity. Everyone is expected to participate in the festival by bringing wood for the fire! A folk song reads:

<i>Shax e shax e Armani</i>	<i>A branch, a branch of</i>
<i>Har kas shax e be dehaad</i>	<i>Whosoever offers a branch,</i>
<i>Khodaa muraad esh be dehaad!</i>	<i>May God grant their wishes!</i>
<i>Har kas shax e na dehaad</i>	<i>Whosoever does not offer a branch,</i>
<i>Khodaa muraad esh na dehaad!</i>	<i>May God not grant their wishes!</i>

So, one must participate in this festival by offering a branch of wood for creating the fire. An outward significance of participating in the festival and offering wood to light the **Physical Fire** is to fight the Evil - the cold of the winter, by helping to provide **Heat** and warmth. A more deeper significance of the festival and the offering of the wood is to remind us to feed and light the **Inner Fire** to fight the Evil - in our mind, our bad thoughts. By remembering to feed the Flaming Fire of Thought within us, we can provide **Light** and Illumination to our Mind. With the development of Good Mind, our soul can progress and fulfill the mission of life.

In our religion, Fire - **Atar** or **Adar** has a very deep significance. For a clearer understanding of this concept, let us examine the context in which Fire is mentioned in few of our scriptures.

Gathas - Yasna 43.9 Asho Zarathushtra communes with Ahura Mazda:
*What is Thy Holy Will? To Whom daily my utmost homage should I pay?
Unto **Thine Inner Flame** I pay my homage & to Thine Eternal Law.*

Gathas - Yasna 46.7 *Who will protect me from evil in my hour of need?
My **Inner Light** and Willpower shall protect me from evil.*

Haptan Yasht - Yasna 36 *Through the Agency of **Thy Divine Fire** ,
approach we Thee and Thee alone, O Ahura Mazda!*

Gathas - Yasna 46.7, Kem Naa Mazda The use of words **Aathraschaa_**
Mananghaschaa together clearly suggests that the prayer does not refer to physical fire.
Instead it refers to *Flaming Fire of Thought*.

Atash Nyaisht *The Fire of Ahura Mazda gives instructions to everyone....*
It cannot be the external fire. The fire here refers to the flash of the intuition which becomes
their Teacher.

Having examined these various references of **Atar**, we observe that in every case, the
external fire implies **internal essence**, the Divine Spark, the **Fravashi** , the Element of
God within us. Interesting to note that St. Paul in the New Testament uses a similar
metaphor: *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth
in you?(I Corinthians,3,16)* .

So each time we offer a piece of sandal wood to the fire, let us remember that **Fire is the
Visible symbol of the Invisible Divine Light**, the Divine Spark , the **Fravashi** within us.

By offering the sandal wood to the fire, we are reminding ourselves that we must light the
fire within us. Just as the piece of sandal wood burns up and turns to ashes, we need
to lead a life of self sacrifice, charity and helping others. Just as the sandal wood leaves a
sweet fragrance behind, we will be remembered by others long after we are gone for the
good deeds that we have done.

Offering wood to the outward Physical Fire is a suggestive gesture to kindle this Divine
Spark within us. By invoking and following the advice of our the Divine Spark - **Fravashi** -
the Inner Fire, we can advance our soul by getting rid of the evil within us. The eternal
Flame within us when sanctified will help us purge out all the evil that seeks sanctuary
within us. It is this Internal Flame that needs to be kept burning by living a useful,
meaningful life, by practicing **Humata** - Good Thoughts, **Hukhta** - Good Words and
Huvarashta - Good Deeds and by following the path of **Asha** - Righteousness, Truth and
Divine Order.

As we celebrate this festival, let us then join in the prayers to thank Ahura Mazda for
providing us this **INNER FIRE** which can guide us to lead a good life and help our soul to
attain Perfection and Immortality.