



**A GUIDE
TO OUR PRAYERS**

This Book is Dedicated to :

***SHREEJI
IRANSHAH***

by
Tehmurasp Shawaksha Pardiwala

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Special preface to the English Edition

Dear Readers,

The intention of publishing this book is to provide necessary guidance to the fellow Zoroastrians who may not be knowing the various do's and don'ts of our prayers.

From the feedback that I received about the Gujarati version of the book I realised that there is enough enthusiasm and desire to know about our prayers. However, language was the barrier as many young and some old people too unfortunately cannot read Gujarati.

It is said that a man who does not read is no better than a man who cannot. However in this case, even the people wanting to read and know more about our prayers could not do so because of the language problem.

With a view to help this group who could get the benefit out of my book, I have ventured into this project to bring out an English edition of the original book written in Gujarati called "Bandagi Maate Jaroori Margadarshan" now called "A guide to our Prayers". To avoid confusion and for the sake of simplification the timings of different Gahs are changed in this book from local time to Indian Standard Time. Some minor desirable changes are also made in this book.

It is my sincere request particularly to the young generation that they should try and learn our mother tongue Gujarati, for the simple reason that they are missing the real taste of the cake. Though we have lost a vast treasure of our religious literature, we still have enough that we can read, understand, digest and put into practice. But most of it is in Gujarati and therefore your attempt to learn this language will not go waste.

With this few words I wish the readers a very pleasant, meaningful and thoughtful reading.

Amen.

Few words about this book

Our Mazdayasni Daen is passing through real bad times. In the Jasa-me-Avanghe Mazda prayer what we pray is that my Daen is the greatest, the most beautiful and the most exalted (Majistacha, Vahistacha, Sraeshstacha). However, the readers are aware of the turmoil through which our Mazdayasni Daen is passing through today.

Under such circumstances one wonders as to what is a prayer, what is the purpose of it, how it should be done and what benefit one derives from the prayers. All such questions crop up in the mind of a common Zarthosti. He feels lost when he does not find all the answers to his questions at one place.

Keeping this in mind this book is written so that a Mazdayasni Zarthosti can recite his prayers with full faith and understanding in accordance with the rules and prescriptions given in the Avesta for prayers.

All the matters given in this book are based on the teachings of Ilm-e-Khshnoom and from the readings of the articles published in "Dini Avaz" and the recently born "Parsi Pukar."

For the knowledge and inspiration that I received from the lecture meetings and articles, I am grateful to the senior members of the Khshnoom committee and hereby give my respect to the elders who are like my teachers and guardians.

It is hoped that our Hamdins will read this book sincerely and seriously and will follow the Mazdayasni path shown by our Paygambar Zarthushtra to get the maximum benefit out of it as is the case with me, and even more.

FOREWORD

This book "Guidance to our Prayers" first in Gujarati and now its English version has come out at a very appropriate time. The writer Mr. Tehmurasp Shawaksha Pardiwala apart from being a qualified Chartered Accountant has taken deep interest in the studies of Xnoom. Keeping implicit faith in the Xnoom teachings and having received the basic knowledge, his intention is to spread the same to our fellow Zorastrians some of whom are rather unfortunate due to ignorance. His effort with this noble intention is praise worthy.

The guidance given in this book is absolutely necessary in today's time. In our Parsi community there was a time when our children used to get the required guidance from their childhood. They used to grow with the fundamental knowledge and practices of our religion and therefore there was no need for such book during that time.

Our home is the first place to receive religious training and thereafter our religious institutions. But ever since the old tradition of a joint family system has broken down and the divisional family system stepped in, when the Zarthostis started living in small houses independently of their parents, the required training and guidance which used to get passed on from grand mothers stopped. (In the past it was against the principle to take dinner without the head covered and without performing Kusti and Cherag no Namaskar) Moreover after the independence of the country and the formation of secular states, our educational institutions where compulsory religious training was imparted also became cosmopolitan.

It is only due to these two reasons that the religious training and practices followed in a family has extinguished. A point of caution mentioned by the author on page 13 is worth noting. I have full support to him for the same. Unfortunately many so called experts and scholars have published such short prayers and books on Nirang, thereby misguiding the members of our community. Please note that little learning is a dangerous thing. The Avesta manthravani is like a doctor's prescription. One cannot make any change in the same, and by doing so one invites spiritual downfall for himself which one does not even realise. No one has any right either to change or to modify the manthravani prayers. In fact, no one is even qualified to do so.

The author has pointed out on page 16 the type of Khordeh Avesta published these days which are full of mistakes and incorrect pronunciations. I suggest that attention be given to this matter also and it is desired that his recommendations are followed. Attempt should also be made to see that the Khordeh Avesta is printed correctly as was done in the past. This is religiously a noble work.

It is becoming quite difficult in today's time to give religious training to the children as the thought process, the life style, the culture and tradition and the training received in schools are poles apart.

We take so much trouble and pay attention to the education of our children. In the same way we should give attention to the religious matters also. It is only then that we will be happy and satisfied that the treasure of our ancestors has been passed on to our children and that we have performed our duties.

We have been able to maintain our health, wealth and prosperity and have preserved the identity of our small community for centuries, only by maintaining the rich heritage of our Daen. There is no doubt about it.

"Athane Anghahat Yatha Havo Vast"

Whatever happens to us happens as per God's wishes.

Meherji Dastur Kekobad Meherjirana
(*Vada Dasturji - Navsari*)

Necessity of prayers

In every religion the necessity of prayers is explained. However in our Mazdayasni Daen special emphasis is given to prayers and it is a command that every Mazdayasni Zarthosti should spend as much time in prayers as he can.

Before we come to our own religion, let us see what some great people have said about prayers.

"Man's need for prayers is as great as his need for bread. As food is necessary for the body, prayer is necessary for the soul. The strife and quarrels with which our atmosphere is so full today are due to the absence of the spirit of true prayer.

True prayer never goes unanswered. When the mind is full of prayerful thoughts everything in the world seems good and agreeable. Prayer is essential for progress of life. It is only when we shed our selfishness with a conscious effort and approach God in true humility that our prayers find a response."

- Mahatma Gandhi.

"Lord, I pray to thee,
Guide my foot steps, enlighten my mind.
That at every moment and in all things,
I may do EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANTEST ME TO DO"

- Mother, Aurobindo Ashram.

It is necessary that a person should have implicit faith in prayers. A prayer without faith would become a sort of a burden which will not bring good results. One cannot cheat Dadaar Ahura Mazada merely by chanting few lines from our Avesta without observing the rules and the disciplines for saying our prayers. It is because Dadaar Ahura Mazada is neither a cheater (A - Farefah) nor can be cheated (Be-Farefah). We will see later on what power there is in our smallest prayer that is "Ashem Vohu" if it is recited with full faith and in a proper way (By observing what is known as Tarikats). Prayers without faith is like dropping water on a duck-back. It will never remain there even for a moment.

Kabir has said that some men go to Mecca and some go to Kashi but their minds wander in emptiness and physical comfort and so the end result is only their legs getting tired of the journey.

According to the Mazdayasni religion there are three elements of prayer. First is the prayer of the body which means purity of physical body 'Aipi' surrounding it. The second prayer is of the mind which requires that there should be truth in the thought process of a person and also on his tongue. And the third prayer is of the soul (Ruvan) which requires chanting of Avesta Manthravani with their 'Mithra' i.e. the good thoughts associated with them.

In all Avesta prayers we praise and remember different 'Yazads' 'Ameshaspands' and other Minoi powers who are working for Dadaar Ahura Mazda in accordance with His plan of creation. The prayers bring us very close to the Yazads or Ameshaspands as the case may be and so repeatedly we recite the word 'Yazamaide' meaning to get attuned to that divine power. For example in Khorshed Neyayesh we get attuned to Khorshed Yazad where as in Meher Neyayesh we get attuned to Meher Yazad.

What happens when a person is attuned divinely through his prayers with a Yazad or Ameshaspand is explained beautifully in the Mazdayasni Daen.

One of the biggest gifts of God to a man is his tongue. Though this tongue is one of the five senses given by God on which man has very little control, it is said that the tongue has power to take a man to his salvation through Meher - Patet and prayers of Manthravani by remembering Dadaar Ahura Mazda with true respect and divine love.

In all our prayers of Neyayesh and Yasht, a para appears "Man Aano Avayad sudan" which reminds us that one day we all will be going in the court room of Dadaar Ahura Mazda. And for that the only path is through prayers. The prayer for the body, the prayer for the mind and for the soul.

The above referred para is the thought process for the progress of a man's Ruvan. It is said in Farsi that prayer is a kind of fortune to a man who is blessed to do it regularly.

Emphasis on Prayers in Avesta

As we have seen earlier, in the Mazdayasni religion the emphasis on prayers is greater than any other religion and therefore it is the duty and responsibility of a Zarthosti to ensure that he spends as much time as he can during the day on prayers and that too after paying attention and finishing his social duties towards his family, community and the country.

Here are few excerpts from our Avesta signifying the importance, the advantages and the emphasis given to prayers.

"One who satisfies Ahura Mazda through prayers gets the most exalted reward through His supreme power. On the other hand, one who does not care to chant his prayers will have to pass through the worst of the worst time towards the end of his life".

**- Gatha Vohukhshathra
Ha 51 Para 6**

"He who prays and remembers Dadaar Ahura Mazda, his Ameshaspands and Yazads with implicit faith is the wisest man."

**- Yazishn
Ha 34 Para 3**

"A man who pleases Testar Tir (Tir Yazad) through prayers gets abundant blessings and reward even if he does not ask for it."

**- Tir Yasht
Para 49**

"O Lord Zarathushtra, prayers are good for mankind. They are the best. They give abundant protection from the bad people.

A man who prays cripples a bad man through the power of his prayers. Prayer is a type of shield which gives protection in a man's life. No evil man is able to face the power of the prayers or is

successful in his bad motives."

- Sarosh Yasht Hadokht
Para 1

A prayer which is based on good thoughts, good words and good deeds, protects the man from all evil things and bad persons. I bow down to the Lord Ahura Mazda for the protection, defence and preservation of my soul and offer all my wealth and riches to Him.

- Yazishn
Ha 58 Para 1.3

O Lord Zarathushtra kindly protect the man who has established friendship with you through prayers, from enemies having bad thoughts. Kindly see that he does not venture into any bad deeds whereby he would have to suffer a loss. O Lord let there be no suffering to the man who remembers you and your Ameshaspands through prayers.

- Hormazd Yasht
Para 24

Whenever a king of a country, a minister of state tries to harm you, is jealous of you, wants to punish you for no fault of yours, please pray in the name of Dadaar Ahura Mazda. That holy father will always be present to protect you.

- Ram Yasht
Para 49-50

Prayer Time

The day of 24 hours is divided into five parts in our Mazdayasni religion. Each part is called Gah, on which different Yazatic forces are working during that period. Different prayers are provided for each of the Gahs and it is necessary to first complete the mandatory prayers and thereafter to go for any other prayers. The timings of the Gahs are dependent upon sunrise and sunset, the details of which are given below. The timings shown here are as per the Indian Standard Time.

Havan Gah	: From 36 minutes before sunrise upto 12.39 p.m. (I.S.T.)
Rapithwan Gah	: From 12.40 p.m. to 3.39 p.m.
Uzirin Gah	: From 3.40 p.m. till 36 minutes after Sunset
Aivisruthrem Gah	: From 72 minutes after sunset upto 12.39 a.m.
Ushahen Gah	: From 12.40 a.m. to 36 minutes before sunrise

The time schedule shown above is based on Indian Standard Time and therefore people praying in different parts of the country should convert the standard time into appropriate local time to ensure that they are following the correct time schedule for prayers in a particular Gah.

Out of the total 72 minutes period after sunset, the first 36 minutes are known as Uzirin's Meher and the next 36 minutes are known as Aivisruthrem's Meher. It is advisable not to recite any prayer during this period, as during this time the power of the dark side of nature is stronger and it cuts off the good effects of our prayer's vibrations.

The first 36 minutes before sunrise is known as Havan's Meher. Please note that our planet earth also known as Geti is hundreds of thousands of miles away from sun (Khorshed) and it takes about nine minutes for the sun's rays to fall on the earth. It is therefore recommended that unless you have very urgent work the prayer for Rapithwan Gah should start at 12.50 p.m. and for Uzirin Gah at 3.50 p.m.

The best time for prayer according to our religion is the time of Ushahen Gah, and thereafter the time of Havan Gah. However in Ushahen Gah during the period from 12.40 a.m. to 2.40 a.m. no behdin should recite any prayers as it is a forbidden period. Only our mobeds who are performing certain religious ceremonies are allowed to do prayers during this period. In Ushahen Gah from 3.00 a.m. till 36 minutes before sunrise is considered as the best time for prayers.

Hoshbam Prayer

The Hoshbam prayer can be recited only during the period of the first 72 minutes before sunrise. It is important to note that this prayer should not be recited during any other time of the day except during the first 72 minutes before sunrise. During the first 36 minutes before sunrise which is known as Havan's Meher, one should recite Sarosh Baj, Havan Gah and then Hoshbam. Whereas in the earlier 36 minutes before the above time one should recite Sarosh baj with Ushahen Gah and then Hoshbam.

For example if the time for sunrise at a particular place is 6.36 a.m. then the 36 minutes period from 5.24 a.m. to 6.00 a.m. is to be considered as Ushahen's Meher meaning under the influence and blessings of Ushahen Gah whereas from 6.00 a.m. to 6.36 a.m. the time period is under the influence and blessings of Havan Gah.

As the timings for sunrise changes gradually, necessary changes should be made in the above prayer timings. It is important to note that during the period of this 72 minutes before sunrise known as the Hoshbam time one should not recite any other prayer like Neyayesh or Yasht except Sarosh baj with Ushahen Gah or Havan Gah as the case may be and the Hoshbam prayer itself.

When you are reciting your prayers in a particular Gah according to the above time schedule care should be taken to finish the prayer within the time limit. If at all due to unavoidable circumstances the prayer cannot be finished within the time frame, one can finish the same in the next 36 minutes. However this rule must be followed exceptionally and not by way of routine.

Another important rule for the prayer is that from the first day i.e. Hormazd roj of Mah Farvardin till the last day i.e. Aneran roj of Mah Meher which is known as Tabestan one has to recite Rapithwan Gah during 12.40 p.m. to 3.39 p.m. Whereas from the first day i.e. Hormazd roj of Mah Avan till the last Gatha i.e. Vahishtoisht gatha which is known as the period of Zamestan one should again pray second Havan Gah meaning the same Havan Gah which we pray in the morning, during the period 12.40 p.m. to 3.39 p.m. It is heartening to note that this type of notices are put in many fire temples these days to draw the attention of Zarathostis who may not be aware of this rule. The different sets of prayers in different Gahs are as under.

Mandatory prayers of five Gahs

Havan gah : Sarosh baj, Havan Gah, Khorshed Neyayesh, Meher Neyayesh, Vispa Humata, and Doa Nam Setayeshne.

Rapithwan Gah : Sarosh baj, Rapithwan Gah, Khorshed Neyayesh, Meher Neyayesh, and Doa Nam Setayeshne.

Uzirin Gah : Sarosh baj, Uzirin Gah, Khorshed Neyayesh, Meher Neyayesh and Doa Nam Setayeshne

Aiwisruthrem Gah : Sarosh baj, Aiwisruthrem Gah, Sarosh Yasht Vadi, with nirang, Atash Neyayesh and Doa Nam Setayeshne

Ushahen Gah : Sarosh baj, Ushahen Gah, Hormazd Yasht, Sarosh Yasht Hadokht, and Doa Nam Setayeshne.

It is important to note that the Vispa Humata prayer should be recited only in Havan Gah. When Havan Gah is recited during the period from Hormazd roj of Mah Avan till the last Gatha i.e. Vahishtoisht Gatha as mentioned above Vispa Humata prayer is also to be recited between 12.40 p.m. to 3.39 p.m. It is only after completing the above sets of prayers in different Gahs, one should go for additional prayers of Neyayesh and Yasht according to one's desire. The above prayers are the fundamental prayers which is the foundation on which the structure in the form of other prayers like Neyayesh and Yasht rests. If the foundation is weak the structure will not bare the load and the desired result of one's prayer will not come through.

The above list of prayers is known as Nani Farajiyat Prayers meaning a condensed list of prayers for every Gah. If one adds the following additional prayers in the given list it becomes in a way a complete list of prayers for that Gah.

Havan Gah : Hormazd Yasht, Ardibehest Yasht, and Sarosh Yasht Hadokht

Rapithwan Gah : Same as above

Uzirin Gah : Same as above

Ushahen Gah : Ardibehest Yasht

If one cannot pray all the Neyayesh every day it is recommended that atleast on the following days the said Neyayesh should be recited.

Mah Bokhtar Neyayesh : On the new moon day (Chandrat), Amavasya day and on full moon day

Atash Neyayesh : On Hormazd roj, Ardibehest roj, Adar roj, Sarosh roj, and Behram roj.

Avan Ardvisura Neyayesh : On Asfandarmad roj, Avan roj, Din roj, Ashishvang roj and Marespand roj.

Some instructions and warnings about prayers

Before we start our prayers let us know about certain disciplines on which proper attention does not seem to have been given these days. There are many Parsis who are wearing a hand knitted cap instead of a regular cap, and at times just a handkerchief is seen on their head. The presence of a Zarthosti in such condition in the name of fashion and mod look in our Fire Temples is undesirable

and is an act unpardonable. It is desired that a Zarathosti enters our Fire Temple in simple clean white dress or in very light coloured dress and with a proper cap on his head. Same also holds good for the ladies and young girls who often enter the Fire Temple in tight dresses and party dresses creating a very shameful atmosphere in that holy place. This is a very sorry state of affair. Time and again this matter has become a topic for discussion in newspapers and journals.

Dadaar Ahura Mazda can be pleased better by observing simplicity in our dress and appearance than by putting on eye-catching dresses and a load of cosmetics.

Another bad habit that is seen in Fire Temples is that some people keep on moving from left to right and right to left like a pendulum of the clock while praying. This is undesirable and creates a nuisance value to the others who are present. If it is difficult to stand and pray without such movement, it is better that the person sits quietly at one place and recites his prayers.

Our prayers are the means to establish direct contact with Yazads and Ameshaspands and therefore the prayers should be carried out with absolute peace of mind and attention towards them so that as long as you are praying, the contact is continued and there is no disturbance in it.

One should not talk during prayer for the same reason as stated above as it would harm the person for breaking the smooth continuous flow of staota coming from the prayer. If it is absolutely necessary one can resort to communication in writing for a limited period of time without uttering a word. If it is not possible to do so and one is forced to talk, then one should perform his Kushti once again and then continue the remaining prayer.

All the Avesta prayers are based on the science of Staota (Vibrations) and therefore when a person recites the prayers correctly it creates beautiful effects and brings delightful colours in nature. The good effect of this prayer is spread all over the earth, and therefore it is desirable that the prayer is recited in an audible and clear tone.

There are certain stanzas in our prayers which are written in Pazand language which should be recited in very low tone as if we are whispering something in someone's ears. This type of prayer is referred in the book as 'Prayer in Baj or Bista', whereas the normal prayer is referred to as 'Pragat prayer'. Some people recite this Baj or Bista prayer in a very queer sound which is not correct. By doing so one creates disturbance in the beautiful colour scheme coming out of the staota which could harm the person rather than help him through the good effects of the prayers.

It is equally wrong to recite the prayers very loudly and thereby disturbing other people present in the Fire Temple. Another important thing to remember is that before we enter any Agiary, Atash Behram or Iranshah it is necessary to wash our face, hands and any other exposed parts of the body with clean water and then do the Kushti prayer. After the Kushti prayer is completed one should not put his/her bare feet on the ground unless the person has worn socks or is walking on a carpet. By walking bare footed on the ground where there is no carpet, the Kushti prayer becomes null and void.

Our body is an ideal electrical instrument which emanates fire energy continuously through "Atashe Vohufriyan". This magnetic energy which comes out is either good or bad depending upon the person's thoughts, action, attitude and life style. When one recites his prayers either standing or in a sitting position bad magnetism passes out through one's legs without disturbing the good effects of the staota.

Our social duties before prayer

In our Mazdayasni Daen there is greater emphasis on the social duties before one commences his prayers. These duties are particularly toward the family, the society, the community and the state. It is said that one must fulfill all his social duties first and then give attention to the prayers. The Mazdayasni Daen commands that every Zarthosti must live in the society and not run away to a forest and recite prayers away from the temptations and problems of a social life. That is why it is said that duty comes first and prayer comes thereafter.

This is beautifully explained in a Hindu mythological story as under.

Once a yogi was meditating in a forest under a tree. On that tree, a crow and a kite were fighting. This disturbed the yogi and he turned his head at those birds with an angry look. By the mere sight of the yogi the birds fell down on the ground and were charred to death. The yogi became proud of his power.

Thereafter, he went to a village and asked for alms from a small hut. A feeble voice of a lady was heard from inside asking the yogi to wait for awhile. The yogi felt insulted by the lady's attitude and was questioning himself that who is this lady asking me to wait at her doorsteps.

Back came the reply from the lady which stunned the yogi. Look, she said I am neither a crow nor a kite as you may be thinking. After sometime the lady of the hut came and served him food and water. The yogi touched her feet and said, "I have meditated for so many years and still I have not acquired such power, then how come you could guess so correctly just by staying in the hut" What is the secret of your power? He asked. The lady said, look I do not know the art of meditation but ever since my childhood I have performed my duties diligently. When I was young I was looking after my brother, sister and parents and now after my marriage I am looking after my husband. Since my husband is not well most of my time passes in caring for him and therefore I asked you to wait for a while.

My inner self is awakened only through performing my duties to my family. But if you want more knowledge on the subject, I suggest you go to the next town and meet one ugly looking butcher, she said. He is more knowledgeable than me. The Yogi thought why should he meet a butcher for such matter. But his desire to know more about the subject tempted him to visit the town. As he entered the town he saw a butcher. The atmosphere was stinking and so the Yogi decided to leave the place. However just before he was about to turn his back the butcher's eye met with the Yogi. He called the Yogi very politely and asked him if he was sent by the lady from the next town. The Yogi was astonished. The butcher requested him to wait till he could finish his work. The Yogi was forced to wait.

After attending to the customers and finishing the household work the butcher returned. It took him almost two hours. The butcher apologised for keeping him waiting so long. He explained to the Yogi that he was busy looking after his crippled parents, served them food, gave them bath and cleaned the house which kept him busy for two hours. And thereafter the butcher explained the philosophy of life to the Yogi which he could not acquire through so many years of meditation.

The Yogi then asked him a question. He said that when you are so knowledgeable and practising such divine philosophy of life, then how come he was carrying out the business of a butcher. Is it not wrong? The butcher said that there is no shame in performing one's duties whatever they be. This is my family business and so I am selling mutton, but personally I am a strict vegetarian. If we perform

our duties honestly and sincerely there is no shame or sin in it. Let it be known to you, the butcher said, that to reach the heart of God Almighty the first step is duty and the last step also is duty. I have not gone to the forest like you to meditate and acquire wisdom, but because I religiously and sincerely perform my duties I have acquired this divine knowledge. When one performs his duties selflessly it brings out unimaginable good results in nature. The Yogi was very happy and fully satisfied with what he heard from the butcher. He saluted the butcher and went away.

According to the science of Staot when one recites the most exalted prayer of Yatha Ahu Vairyo (Ahunavar) it brings out different colours like sky blue, yellow, red etc. in nature. The mechanism of such colours emanating through Staot is explained in Staot Yasna. A Zoroastrian has to follow the principle of keeping Dadaar Ahura Mazda happy through prayers and practices (tarikats) as given by Asho Zarathushtra Paigambar. This is the fundamental principle of mazdayasni religion. That is why most of our prayers begin with "Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao"

The following short story will explain you the effects of Avesta Staota and its power in nature. This story is narrated by late Mr. Cawasji Pestonji Sarkari in the memorial volume of Ustad Saheb Behramshah Naoroji Shroff. Mr. Cawasji's friend whose full name is not given in the report but indicated as M.A.A. was a sanskrit scholar. They often used to discuss the effects of vibrations created through prayers, which we call in our religion as Staot. This friend of Mr. Cawasji also knew a good deal of science and chemistry. During that time i.e. in the year 1917 he spent a sum of Rs.500 to 1000 and prepared a screen which had some elasticity and some what transparent. The screen was as thin as paper and was light yellow in colour.

On Tuesday the 7th August 1917 (Roj Hormazd, Mah Asfandarmad as per Shehenshahi calendar and Roj Behram, Mah Amardadas per Fasli calendar) they decided to conduct some experiment on this screen. They wanted to find out the effects of Staota on this screen. They had hired a room in the old Naigam which was known as "Vithobacha Wada" (Vithoba's courtyard) The room was white washed and cleaned beforehand.

First the Hindu friend started reciting his prayers in sanskrit. The effect was visible on the chemical screen which changed its colour from pale yellow to Black, Green, Yellow and Red. Thereafter Mr. Sarkari had to see the effects of our manthravani prayers. Before doing so he performed a Kushti and then started with Sarosh baj. The screen started showing beautiful colours like Blue, Pink, Light Green, etc. Thereafter when he recited Yatha, Ashem prayers the screen developed a crack and at the third Ashem Vohu prayer the screen broke into pieces. Mr. Sarkari's friend was astonished to see this and he realised that his screen was not strong enough to bare the vibratory effects of our Staota and surely the Avesta Staota must be more powerful than the Sanskrit shloks, he admitted.

About selected stanzas picked up from our prayers

The Mazdayasni Daen teaches us that one must live his life strictly according to the rules and principles which are laid down by our prophet Vaxure Vaxuran Asho Zarathushtra Paigambar in harmony with the nature. It is only then that one would receive the divine wisdom and knowledge and would acquire the power to know the Almighty God. One of such principles is that the Avesta prayers must be strictly recited in accordance with the rules of staota and as framed by our Raineedar (Guide) Dasturane Dasturan Adarbad Marespand Saheb. No one has any right nor even the calibre, wisdom and knowledge to change the formation of our prayers as it would disturb the good effects of staota in nature.

It is noticed that some selected paras are picked up from the regular prayers which forms a part of small prayers and Nirang (essence of prayers). The selection of the paras is based on its literal translation and meaning and is often used as Hambandagi. This is totally a misuse of the Manthravani and it does not bring out good results as a regular prayer would do. On the contrary the person using such mini prayer books and nirang would be wasting his time and becomes liable for punishment in the eyes of Ahura Mazda for misusing the staota.

Generally such mini prayers are designed by picking up selected paras from Yajashne, Vandidad, Visparad, Gehsarnu, Gatha, Neyayesh, Yasht etc. By doing so the rhythmic flow of staota designed by Adarbad Marespand Saheb gets broken and an unpardonable disturbance takes place in the same. It is therefore forbidden to recite such prayers. It is therefore requested that readers refrain from reciting such prayers. If it is not possible to recite several of our prayers it is better to restrict the prayers to the bare minimum. However one should never resort to the mini prayer books and the Nirangs given out by the so called experts as it would come in the progress of our Ruvan (Soul).

**"Yoi Noit Ashem Mainyanta
Ayeibo Huire Vohu Asamno"**

Meaning the divine wisdom remains away from those who do not give attention to Ashoi.

It is also important to note that those who are fortunate enough by circumstances to do the recommended prayers in all Gahs, including the extra prayers of Neyayesh and Yasht, it is quite difficult to do so in the short period of 24 hours. One would then feel that Dadaar Ahura Mazda has made the day of 24 hours quite short. However as one cannot eat and digest all the food available to him in a buffet, same is the case with Avesta prayers. As one gets indigestion from over eating, one also gets indigestion from over praying and this is the opinion of Xnoom brothers and it is quite true.

The relationship of Jeeram with the Religion

As we saw earlier different religions prescribe different methods of prayers. The five basic religions are formed on the basis of Jeeram and its different stages in the evolution and progress of a Ruvan (Soul).

The prophets of different religions prescribe the rules and regulations to be followed by the people belonging to the particular Jeeram. The basic theme of all the religion is the same, that is salvation of the soul. However the method, the rituals and the religious practices are definitely different for all the religions and that is prescribed by the concerned Prophets of those religions.

Just as the body needs food for its survival and living, the Ruvan needs to follow the tarikats (path shown by the prophets). The identification of a Ruvan (Soul) is based on Aspandi. The level, the stage upto which a Ruvan has progressed is measured by this Aspandi. The highest level of a Ruvan is attained when it reaches the level of 72 Aspandi. Just as a tree needs water, some manure and sun's rays in the same way Ruvan needs to follow the tarikats prescribed in his religion for its progress.

If a person follows different tarikats not prescribed under his religion he puts his soul in a very awkward position and instead of the Ruvan getting enlightened and making further progress, it falls into darkness.

Importance of Four Directions

In our prayer tarikats (discipline) there is lot of importance given to directions. Of the four directions, North is considered as the lowest in importance. In fact North is considered as a direction which is away from the good planetary effects. It is therefore advised that a common man like us should not recite any prayers facing North. In fact one should not even have good thoughts facing the North. It is only when we crack our Kusti during Kusti prayers it should be done in the North direction.

The only prayer that one can do facing the North is the 'Char Dishano Namaskar' i.e. salutation prayer for the four directions. The order of this prayer should be as under

First facing toward South, then facing East thereafter facing West and finally facing North. This prayer can be recited only between sunrise and sunset. That means the prayer is to be recited only during Havan, Rapithwan and Uzirin Gah. This prayer cannot be recited after sunset in Aiwisruthrem and Ushahen Gah.

Some tips on prayers

Before starting a prayer it is good to start with 2 Yatha and 1 Ashem. Similarly, the prayer should end with 1 Yatha and 2 Ashem.

The same order is recommended before beginning any good work and on completion of the work. Our hamdins who are in service can also follow this rule before they start their work in the office and at the end of the day. This will definitely bring good results.

In our Mazdayasni Daen certain routine work is required to be performed only after taking Baj (A short prayer designed for the particular work). For example one should recite the Baj prescribed before bath (Nahavani Baj). Similarly there is a Baj for cutting nails and hair and Baj before going to toilet (Haajate Jawani Baj) etc.

The detailed list and explanation of all this Bajs is available in the prayer book published by The Parsi Vegetarian and Temperance Society. The purpose of this Baj prayers is to help us in achieving progress of our Ruvan, Aipi, Khoreh etc. It also helps us in converting the Vohun (Evil) in our body into Gav (Good).

During the prayer one must be careful to ensure that he recites the prayer correctly without missing any word from it. The same way when one prays a particular Neyayesh or Yasht, one must remember the correct Roj and the Mah of that day and there should not be any mistake in the same. It is said that the prayer goes waste if a wrong Roj or Mah is uttered during the prayers.

In olden days if a Mobed would make such a mistake his Barashnum (The spiritual bath of nine days required to be taken before carrying out certain religious ceremonies) could be rendered useless and he would be required to take the bath once again. Such strict principles were followed in the olden days.

A lot of importance is also given to correct pronunciation of the Avesta prayers. These rules are explained in 'Paiti Prasao' meaning laws of prayers. While doing your prayers where to stop, where not to stop, how long one should stop, where one should pray loudly and clearly and where one

should pray very softly is all explained in these laws for prayers.

It is also mentioned that the Avesta prayers should be recited without adding or dropping any word from the complete prayer as is designed by Adarbad Marespand Saheb. This also gives an indirect indication that one must not pray selected stanzas, mini prayers, nirangs etc.

Ustad Saheb Behsht Behreh Behramsha Navroji Shroff has mentioned that the prayer books published these days are full of mistakes and incorrect pronunciations. They are creating obstacles for the Zarthostis who would like to pray sincerely and correctly and therefore they are deprived of the full benefit from their prayers.

Those who wish to pray correctly and strictly according to the science of staots are recommended to use the prayer book published by the Parsi Vegetarian and Temperance Society. Our younger generation not knowing Gujarati language often use English prayer books. It is very difficult to correctly pronounce and carry out the Manthravavni prayers from such English books. It is therefore suggested that instead of using an English prayer book one should use a Hindi prayer book which will be very easy to read and the person will enjoy the prayer and will get the pleasure of reciting Manthravani. Ustad Saheb has recommended Hindi language as it is very near to Farsi and Urdu.

One more tarikat for our prayers is that when one recites Khorshed Neyayesh and Meher Neyayesh, he/she must do so facing the Sun as far as possible. Some people recite these prayers in front of Atash Padshah either in Agiary or Atashbehram, this is incorrect. It is because Khurshed Yazad's status is the Highest compared to the status of Atash Padshah of Agiary or Atashbehram. It is rather an insult of Khorshed Yazad to recite the Khorshed/Meher Neyayesh prayers in front of Atash Padshah in Agiary or Atashbehram. The same goes for the Mah Bokhtar and Avan Nyaishes.

In a similar way, according to the laws of staot yasna it is not correct to recite Atash Neyayesh and Ava Neyayesh one after the other. If it is desired to do so one must pray five Yatha after Atash Neyayesh and then start Ava Neyayesh so that the divine effects of both the type of staots are maintained in the nature. In the normal situation the effects of these staots (Fire and Water) work in opposite direction and neutralises the good effects. However by praying five Yatha, the good effects of both the staots are maintained and therefore it does not bring any harm on the person for neutralising the good effects of the staots. One must also remember that while doing the prayers, first one should complete all Neyayesh and then only any Yasht prayers can be started. This is valid for the first three Gahs. Havan, Rapithvan and Uzirin.

'Ashem Vohu' where, when and how to pray

As mentioned earlier one must refrain from praying selected paras, small prayers, nirangs etc. Instead, if only Yatha, Ashem is recited with complete faith it is more helpful to the person. Let us see the power of our Yatha and Ashem.

During the conversation with Dadaar Ahuramazda, Asho Zarthusstra Paigambar asks Dadaar Ahuramazda, tell me what is that which is full of divine wisdom and Ashoi? Dadar Ahuramazda replies that that is Ashem Vohu. Paigambar Saheb asks the second question. Tell me when is the value of one Ashem equal to ten Ashem? Ahuramazda replies that when one Mazdayasni Zarthosti recites one Ashem with good thought, good words and good work before taking his food the value of one Ashem goes upto ten Ashem. Later on Dadaar Ahuramazda explains our Paigambar Saheb that while drinking the holy Hom water the value of one Ashem at that time goes upto one hundred

Ashem. One Ashem recited while taking a turn in the sleep goes upto one thousand Ashem, one Ashem recited the first thing in the morning after touching the feet to the ground goes upto ten thousand Ashem. And finally when a Zarhosti finishes his time on this Geti (Earth) and is ready to leave the Spenta Armaity (Geti) for Heavenly abode, meaning when he is about to pass away and breathing his last the effect of one Ashem recited at that time goes round the entire Geti.

In addition to the above instances, in the following cases also it is recommended to recite one Ashem.

One Ashem when the cock crows early morning. The sound of the cock cuts into the bad influences in nature. Its loud sound goes way up in the sky through the clouds. At that time when one Ashem is recited it goes a long way up in the sky alongwith the powerful sound of the cock. Similarly when you see our Varasyaji (the sacred bull) or any other domestic animal like a cow or a bull chewing the cud quietly and serenely it is a good time to recite one Ashem. It is because at that point of time the thought process of these animals is of a very high order. One Ashem is also very helpful when one gets a bad thought in one's mind or when one comes to know about the demise of a person, particularly a Zarhosti. One Ashem when you go to see your boss in the office or a person, when a lamp gets extinguished or when one sneezes. However if you sneeze during your prayers one should not recite Ashem at that time but simply continue the prayers.

It is possible that due to certain limitations or constraint one may not be able to do one's normal prayers as given earlier. In such events the following numbers of Ahunavar (Yatha Ahu Vairyo) prayers are recommended. However it must be noted that this should happen in exceptional cases and not by way of routine.

<i>Normal prayers</i>	<i>No. of Yatha in lieu of normal prayers</i>
Five Gahs	65 Yatha for each Gah
Khorshed Neyayesh	103 Yatha
Meher Neyayesh	65 Yatha
Mah Bokhtar, Ava, and Atash Neyayesh	65 Yatha for each Neyayesh
Ardibehesh Yasht	65 Yatha
Sarosh Yasht Hadokht (small)	75 Yatha
Sarosh Yasht Vadi (big)	103 Yatha

In addition to the above table, the Ahunavar prayer is also prescribed for different situations in life. There are innumerable instances given in Avesta where the Ahunavar prayer is recommended, however following are the few situations through which today's Zarhosti passes when he can recite one Ahunavar.

One Yatha before going to see a stranger. One Yatha before crossing a river or putting your legs in a lake sea river etc. Two Yatha before giving blessings to someone. Five Yatha before starting a new work. Five Yatha before leaving the house and again while entering the house. Five Yatha before lighting a lamp. Five Yatha if one feels lost on the road and does not find proper direction or is in any trouble. Twenty one Yatha if one comes across a funeral procession on the road.

Our religion also prescribes different sets of prayers for the bad planetary effects on a person. It is suggested that one should include the following prayers alongwith the normal prayers to protect

oneself from the bad planetary influence.

Prayers for bad planetary influence

<i>Bad Planetary influence of</i>	<i>Prayer</i>
Sun	Khorshed and Meher Neyayesh
Moon	Mah Bokhtar Neyayesh
Mars	Behram Yasht
Mercury	Tir Yasht
Jupiter	Hormazd Yasht
Venus	Khordad Yasht (<i>to recite 3 times</i>)
Saturn	Avan Yasht
Rahu/Ketu	Moti Haptan Yasht

Prayers for physical ailments

Our Avesta also prescribes prayers for physical ailments and sickness The same are as under.

For problems relating to eyes - Tir Yasht, Khorshed Yasht or Khorshed Neyayesh

For brain related problems - Mah Bokhtar Neyayesh

For all types of problems and difficulties - Behram Yasht

For worldly happiness - Ashishvagh Yasht

To break and destroy the bad influence of Ahreman (Dark forces) - Haptan Yasht.

From the above list one can see that what treasure is available in our Avesta prayers. It is said that "Hich Chiz Nist, Ke Ander Avesta Nist" meaning there is nothing elsewhere in this world which you cannot find in Avesta.

It is exactly because of this, that when one Mazdayasni Zarthosti leaves his ancestral religion and tries to find peace and solace in other religion he makes the greatest mistake of his life. Knowingly or unknowingly he commits a very grave sin for which his Ruvan will have to suffer and undergo punishment.

Poet Kabir has said that "*Pardesa Khojan Gaya, Ghar Hira ki Khan, Kach Manika Parkhun, Kyoon Ave Pehchan*". Meaning a diamond mine was in my house itself, but I have travelled elsewhere in search of it. How can such a man distinguish a pure diamond from an ordinary looking glass?

After saying all these things about our prayers, I have only to say in the end that as you reap so shall you get. Only a fool will expect a harvest of rice by sowing wheat, whereas a wise person will get the reward of prayers after knowing the importance of the prayers and its benefits. Anyone who

ignores this is warned as the Ustad Saheb has said at one place that a man who passes his life in worldly entertainment, disregarding and disrespecting the messages of Asho Zarthushtra would be suffering profusely in his next birth when he would be doing nothing but crying in sorrow for the sins that he had committed in the previous birth and the ignorant attitude that he had shown to the messages of Lord Zarthushtra.

A special prayer on "Jamshedi Navroze"

The Jamshedi Navroze day is celebrated by Mazdayasni Zarthosti in a very special way. It does not fall on any of the Zoroastrian Roj - Mah calendar which we follow for our other religious ceremonies. Every year it falls on 21 st of March.

On this particular day the Khurshed Yazad shines with its full glitter and glory and spreads its sunshine (roshni) on this Geti (earth) abundantly. On this auspicious day the following prayer is recommended in praise of Khurshed Yazad and to get his bountiful blessings.

In Havan Gah : 3 Khorshed Neyayesh,
 1 Meher Neyayesh and
 1 Vispa Humata

The above order makes one set of prayer. Likewise one should pray 3 such sets in the same order. This will end up in reciting 9 Khorshed Neyayesh, 3 Meher Neyayesh and 3 Vispa Humata prayers in Havan Gah.

In Rapithwan Gah: 3 Khorshed Neyayesh,
 1 Meher Neyayesh

Two sets of prayers in Rapithwan Gah, maintaining the above order. That means in Rapithwan Gah one will recite 6 times Khorshed Neyayesh and 2 times Meher Neyayesh. It is important to note that in Rapithwan Gah the Vispa Humata prayer is NOT to be recited.

Note: However when Havan Gah is recited from Hormazd roj of mah Avan till the last Gatha (Vahishtoisht) instead of Rapithwan Gah, (Second Havan Gah) one should follow the prayer set given above for Havan Gah, but only 2 times, and NOT 3 times.

In Uzirin Gah : 3 Khorshed Neyayesh,
 1 Meher Neyayesh

Only one set as prescribed above is to be recited in this Gah. Thus in Uzirin Gah one would recite 3 Khorshed Neyayesh and 1 Meher Neyayesh. No Vispa Humata prayer in Uzirin Gah.

This set of prayers in the three different Gahs is to be recited only once in a year. It is highly recommended to a true Zoroastrian to do so and get the benefit out of it.

Some forgotten prayers

In our Mazdayasni Daen there is a wealth of prayers out of which a wise person can select some prayers according to his need and choice and do it in addition to the prescribed minimum prayers of each Gah. However some prayers are almost forgotten and they have literally become show pieces in our books. It is time that we Zoroastrians should look at this prayers also and recite them occasionally.

These prayers are as under:

Afrin Paygambar Zarthushtra
Sepase Akenareh
Name Khavar
Chithrem Buyat

Various Baj before taking bath, for cutting nails, while going to toilet etc. Namaskars of Fire, Water, Mountain, Gospand etc.

Patet Pashemani

Our Dasturan Dastur Adarbad Marespand Saheb through his vision and foresightedness of the events to come in future and the conditions of Zorastrians during that period, had composed this prayer for us and given it to us as a gift.

In the present environment and conditions in which we are living, knowingly or unknowingly we commit several sins, big and small. We do not even realise to what extent we defy the Mazdayasni laws and tarikats which are thinner than a hair line. In order to save ourselves from such sins and to ask pardon of such sins this prayer is designed. This prayer should be recited quite frequently if not every day.

This prayer is of two kinds. One for the self and another for our dear departed souls. The prayer for the self is known as "Patet Pashemani" and the prayer for the departed souls is known as "Patet Ruvanni". If one wants to recite the prayer for the departed soul that is "Patet Ruvanni", the following rules should be observed.

From the moment a person takes his last breath and passes away from this Geti till the early morning of the fourth day which is known as "Charum ni Bamdad" one should not recite this prayer for that soul at all. Thereafter one can and should recite this prayer as often as possible. The Mithra (thought) of this prayer are very useful to the Ruvan (the departed soul)

In addition to the above timings, one must also not recite this prayer during the Fasli Muktaf (approx. 11th to 20th March) time. If we are praying for our departed soul we should do it separately for each of the departed soul and not collectively for a group of them. Further this prayer should be recited last after all other prayers are over. If one is reciting Patet Ruvanni then it must be done after Doa Tandarosti. However when the Patet Pashemani is recited for self, then one should recite this prayer first and then go to Doa Tandarosti.

After knowing all the merits of prayers and their usefulness it is hoped that the reader will recite his prayers more meaningfully and with implicit faith in our religion. This in turn will bring happiness peace of mind and upliftment of the soul. It is said that when one Mazdayasni is performing his prayers in accordance with the rules and tarikats he not only helps himself but also brings peace on this earth. And for this noble gesture he has not to spend any money. This is the greatest charity of a Mazdayasni Zarthosti to humanity.

* * * * *

"Ush Moi Ujareshwa Ahura"

O Lord Ahura Mazda please make me spotless,

take me out from the bad influence of the dark forces in nature.

Please help me in converting the evil (Vohun) within me into good (Gav) and

take me from darkness to the divine light.

Atha Jamiyat Yatha Afrinami

- Let it be happen as it is wished.

* * * * *

Some Quotes on Prayers

1 Are our prayers answered?

Ask and Ye shall get

Seek and Ye shall find

Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

But because the average man does not know what to ask, how to seek and knock, he feels that his prayers are not answered.

2 Prayer is the golden key which when turned with the hand of faith unlocks God's treasures.

3 Begin your day with prayer. Let prayer be the key of the morning and lock of the evening.

4 My words fly above my thoughts remain below, words without thoughts never to heaven go.

5 Bandagi Kun Bandagi Kun Bandagi . Jindagi Bin Bandagi Sharmindagi. Life is for prayers. A life without prayer is a shameful life.

6 Tulsi Is Sansar Men Kar Lijiye Do Kam, Dene Ko Tukada Bhala Lene ko Harinam.

Poet Tulsidas has said that O Man do just two things in life. Give some food to the hungry and Take God's name on your lips, that is remember him all the time.

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