

# GAHAMBARs

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## References:

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## THE MEANING OF THE WORD "GAHAMBAR"

The word *Gahambar* is the Pahlavi word `Gaasambar'.  
*Gahambar* = *Gaas* + *Ambar*  
*Gaas* means time or season, and  
*Ambar* means getting together of people.

Thus derivatively, a *Gahambar* would mean a seasonal festival. The later writings connect the *Gahambars* with cosmogony. Each *Gahambar* represents an evolutionary stage in the creation of the universe.

## THE SIX GAHAMBARs

There are six *Gahambars* throughout the year, occurring at non uniform intervals. Each *Gahambar* has a duration of five days. Their names signify that they were seasonal festivals.

Name of <i>Gahambar</i>	Literal Meaning	Days of Year
1. <i>Maidhyozarem</i>	mid-spring	41st-45th day
2. <i>Maidhyoishem</i>	mid-summer	101st-105th day
3. <i>Paitishhayem</i>	harvesting time	176th-180th day
4. <i>Ayathrem</i>	begin of winter	206th-210th day
5. <i>Maidhyarem</i>	mid-winter	286th-290th day
6. <i>Hamaspathmaedem</i>	vernal equinox	361st-365th day

In the Avestan times, these celebrations were quite applicable to the climatic conditions and to the predominantly agricultural community. At present, due to the different geographical and climatic conditions, these *Gahambars* do not fit into the seasonal pattern. However, the *Gahambars* continue to be celebrated at the regular intervals of the year, as they were arranged in ancient times.

## THE SIX STAGES OF EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSE

In the *Pahlavi* literatures of *Gahambar Afringan* and *Gahambar Aafrin*, the *Gahambars* are identified with the six evolutionary stages with which the Universe was brought into manifestation by *Ahura Mazda*. Each *Gahambar* symbolically represents an evolutionary stage in the creation of the universe.

**STAGE I** The first stage created Luminaires, the stars in the sky and fire in the universe, which must have been in a glowing white hot nebulous cloudy state.

**STAGE II** When this mass began to cool off, water was created, enveloping the globe.

**STAGE III** With further cooling and evaporation earth began to appear at the surface containing minerals underneath.

**STAGE IV** Out of this soil sprouted vegetation, the first sign of life.

**STAGE V** The next change produced animal kingdom from some elementary protoplasm.

**STAGE VI** These animals evolved to a point when individual mentality was manifest. Man, the Thinker came into existence.

## THE CELEBRATION OF GAHAMBAR

A *Gahambar* is a festival set apart for congregational worship and thanksgiving to *Ahura Mazda*. Liturgical services are performed to thank God for the institution of the different seasons, on the regularity of which depends the prosperity of mankind. Also, to thank Him for the six best and grand creations of Nature. The ceremonies performed include:

- a. The *Afringan of Gahambar*
- b. The *Baj of Gahambar*
- c. The *Yasna of Gahambar, Visperad*
- d. The *Paviof Gahambar*

The liturgical service is followed by a solemn feast, wherein members of the congregation participate. '*Gahambar-ni-Chashni*', the ceremonial and communal eating of the things offered in the *Gahambar* ceremonies forms an important part in the *Gahambar* celebration.

## RATIONALE OF GAHAMBAR

The *Gahambars* are festivals during which the people "join hands together to get benefit of mutual aid" as stated in the prayers. The subtle rationale of the *Gahambar* then is to promote brotherhood and fellowship spirit in the community. The rich and the poor, the rank and the file

are brought together to meet, interact socially and respect each other. Feasting with simple food should inculcate a reverence of *Ahura Mazda* for His simpler yet profoundly essential basic gifts of His creations, which are to be shared by each and every one of us. Sitting together at the common table should inspire each of us to ponder and realize that we have an obligation to strive to share the good things of life with others. That, this sharing attitude need not be restricted to the *Gahambar* only, but indeed should extend into all other walks of our life. Last, but not he least, *Gahambar* festivity imparts a sense of timeliness. To participate in a *Gahambar* is akin to disciplining one's self that there is law and order in the universe and everything needs to be done at it's proper opportune time ( *Gah* ).

#### INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION IN GAHAMBAR

In the '*Gahambar Afringan*' it is stated that each Zoroastrian should participate in the *Gahambar* by either donating in kind or by donating cash to support and promote the activity. If a person cannot afford to donate in cash or kind, then at least he should do is to be present at the *Gahambar* prayers to participate in the praise and thanksgiving to *Ahura Mazda* for His creations. **The four words used in the '*Afrin of Gahambar*' are *Yazad, Sizad, Khurad, Dehad*. They mean: Pray, Perform, Eat, Give.** They seem to suggest the different ways in which one can participate in the celebration of the *Gahambars*.

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