

A brief synopsis of Atash Niyayesh:

The 1st *karda* begins with **“O Fire, the purifier of all things pertaining to Ahura Mazda! I praise Thy worship, invocation, good health-giving and friendly gift. O fire, thou art worthy of worship and invocation, mayest Thou be worthy of worship and invocation in the abodes of men. May there be greatness (or happiness) unto that man who shall always worship thee with fuel, baresman, milk and mortar in hand.”**

Here, Fire is **worshipped**. Only Divine Beings are worshipped and Fire, as the Son of Ahura Mazda, is a Living Spiritual Entity that grants boons such as good health, purifies *druj* and gives victory against the demons. If Fire is just a symbol of Ahura Mazda, it would not be worshipped and would not have the Glory (*Khoreh*) that grants spiritual boons. The Fire in the abodes of men also refers to the Fire, the spark of the Divine that is within us. Fire blesses the devotee who worships it with the offerings of fuel (dry wood), baresman, milk and mortar. This indicates the ritual of Yasna (*Ijeshni*)! The Yasna Text as well as the ritual includes all the 72 *ha* out of which only a minor portion contain the Gathic Text. **The Atash Niyayesh is a part of the Yasna Text (*ha* 33 and *ha* 62) and the performance of the Yasna ritual is declared as essential for the worship of Ahura Mazda and His Son, Fire!** Haptan Yasht (Yasna Haptan Haiti) also is a part of the Yasna Text (*ha* 35 to 42) and declares that through Atash the devotee can see and commune with Ahura Mazda, and this is done through the ritual of Yasna!

In the 2nd *karda*, the devotee wishes that Fire is always provided with fuel, incense, **nourishment** (of manthra), and with proper, dried logs of wood. It is mandatory to offer only dry logs of wood, purified by the Sun, to Fire.

In the 3rd *karda*, the devotee prays, “O Fire of Ahura Mazda! May Thou burn forever, up to the time of Frashogard. May Thou burn in this house; may Thou **increase and burn brightly in this house.**” Here, the word house also refers to the ‘house’ the soul lives in during its sojourn on Earth. The physical body is also a ‘house’, a temple in which the immortal soul lives. The physical body enthrones the Divinity during life and therefore our religion declares that we take utmost proper care of the physical body as well the mind and keep the Flame of Fire burning brightly within so we may ‘see’ the (illuminated) Path that leads us to Frashogard.

In *karda* 4, the Devotee asks for long life, true everlasting spiritual happiness together with **‘Fluent Tongue’** and spiritual wisdom! True happiness is not of this earth indicating merely material wealth and fame. These are temporary. True happiness is acquired when a person gains spiritual ‘ushta’, or good health of body, through an illumined mind and pure soul. These are attained through self-sacrifice and by acquiring spiritual wisdom. “Ushta” also refers to the spiritual ecstasy gained when one is in tune with the laws of Nature and with the Divine Beings through manthra and worshipping the Fire. The “fluent tongue” indicates intellect. A word uttered is but the deed (manifestation) of a thought. Thought precedes word. As we think so we become, resulting in the words we utter. Good words are the result of good thinking as a result of acquiring a spiritually illumined mind. Hence, Atash grants a fluent tongue to those who worship

it with Yasna, manthra and a spiritually enlightened mind. A ‘fluent tongue’ or ‘word’ also refers to the energy of sound which has the potency to destroy ‘druj’ from within and from the environment surrounding us. Sound also creates. It creates a protective ‘shield’ around us to prevent the dark forces from entering our aura.

Next, in the 5th *karda*, the devotee asks for the ability to stand **firm-footed** (i.e. to be staunch, obedient and having faith in the religion), to be awake (to be alert to discard any unrighteous thoughts), not to be idle (work is worship) and to be steadfast in duty. The devotee also prays for an **offspring** who is full of innate wisdom, worthy and capable of ruling (having control over desires), possessed of good respect, who will lead others on the path of righteousness and one who is as courageous as a hero who defeats the demons, meaning the demons of Akoman or bad thoughts. The devotee asks Fire to grant such an offspring whose good deeds will bring honor to the family, community, country and to the religion. Atash is connected to ‘offspring’ because Atash is Ahura Mazda’s Own Son (Ahura’s Offspring) and it is Atash who is the creative seed connected to life and creation. Children represent their parents, inherit their genetic characteristics and good children indicate good upbringing, good *tokham* (*boonyad*) and lineage. Children are the ones in charge of the future of the family, country, community and religion. Therefore, good children are asked for as boon from Fire.

In *karda* 6, we pray for **spiritual knowledge** that will guide us through life. We pray for knowledge pertaining to the spiritual world. The devotee wishes to obtain paradise as reward for holiness and worship performed with faith and righteousness.

The 7th *karda* is most suggestive of intuition. It states that **Fire cooks the food for the day and night in return for righteous offerings**. Food in mysticism means *karni* or deeds. As one sows, so does one reap! If the crop is bad, one starves. Our bad thoughts, words and deeds result in bad ‘food’ and spiritual starvation for the mind and soul. On the other hand, good food, good crops (indicating good thoughts and deeds) result in good, healthful food, both spiritually as well as physically. Day indicates life, and the period of night indicates life after death, rest from work or ‘transformation’ when the body is discarded by the soul. This *karda* teaches that there is reward and punishment according to one’s own actions in life. That there is an after life and, Fire is the Judge of our actions. It is our own conscience (Atash-e Nariosang which lives within our soul) in the form of good or bad *kerdar* that gives us the judgment of our deeds on the day of ‘chahrum’.

The next *karda* reveals that **Atash looks at the hands of devotees and inquires as to what the walking friend brings for the sitting friend?** The “walking friend” is a reference to the physical body responsible for actions while the “sitting friend” refers to the soul who sits and watches the thoughts, words and deeds performed by the body. The Atash within us inquires of the body as to what ‘food’ will be given to the Atash? These words are very thought provoking. During our daily life we get engrossed with mundane matters and we feed the physical body nourishing food at least 3 times a day. But do we take equal care to also feed our mind with good thoughts, thoughts of spirituality, religion, and remember to feed the soul with spiritual ‘food’ of manthra, devotion and performance of rituals such as simple *kusti-padyab*, doing at least a *divo* and reciting the mandatory manthras? Here, we are asked to take stock, daily, whether or not we have fed the mind and the soul just as well as we have fed the physical body. If we deprive the mind and soul of spiritual nourishment, the soul will be malnourished and weak and will not

serve us well on the spiritual Path. Therefore, Atash looks at the hands of the devotee and wishes from the “walking friend” to bring “food” for the “sitting friend”.

In the Second and Third *Fargard* of the Hadokht Nask, ‘food’ is mentioned with regard to the food of the soul of the righteous and the wicked in the after life state. “Food” for the after-life condition refers to the spiritual ‘food’ and not to the food partaken for the health of the physical body as the physical body is discarded when the transition called ‘death’ takes place. Spiritually, food refers to thoughts, words and deeds.

The 9th *karda* reveals that if any person/devotee brings unto that Fire (“sitting friend”) **fuel** (prayers/manthra), baresman (rituals), the fragrant, dry wood, then to such a person, the Fire of Ahura Mazda, being pleased with such dedication and reverence, grants the boon wished for. The “fragrant wood” spiritually refers to the fragrance of good deeds which spread happiness to others as well as to the doer of such pleasant deeds. We offer sandalwood to the fire because sandalwood is dry and has fragrance.

In the last and 10th *karda*, the sacred Fire of Ahura Mazda blesses the devotee with many **flocks of cattle** (virtues), **many sons** (who will continue the “tokham”, lineage and religion), a **spiritually enlightened mind, good health of body, mind and soul, and also spiritual happiness**. Fire grants these to those who bring dry fuel purified by light (Sun’s rays) and make the offering through righteousness. It is imperative that only dry, clean wood be offered to Fire.

Dry wood is also suggestive of the spiritual state when vices have been evaporated, replaced by virtues that do not produce smoke (indicating a spiritually blinding effect, unable to ‘spiritually’ see clearly through the ‘smoke’). Dried by “Light” indicates spiritual illumination. As indicated in the Prelude to this Niyayesh, Asho Zarathushtra dedicates (offers) his whole Life to Ahura Mazda’s Atash. The devotee addresses Fire as the purifier and yearns to be purified through Fire (O Fire of Ahura Mazda, do Thou Purify me...). Therefore, the true self-sacrifice which is giving up of vices, is indicated as an offering to Fire, the Greatest, *Mazishta Yazad!*

Reference is made to “cattle”. For the sake of mankind, cattle are important because through cattle, men get nourishment. Both cattle and men are useful to each other. However, “cattle”/animal also mystically refer to the living cells that create virtues or vices, the good mentality or animal instincts within us that are either spiritually progressive or destructive. It is appropriate that the meaning of “cattle” in this Niyayesh be taken as “virtues” since in the 8th *karda*, ‘food’ refers to the spiritual food of the soul, i.e. deeds and not to the food partaken as nourishment of the physical body. “Flocks of cattle” as a boon granted by Ahura Mazda refers to the spiritual gifts to be possessed by the mind and the soul as the virtues the devotee requires to progress on the Path of Righteousness.

As in the beginning, at the end of Atash Niyayesh too, homage is paid to Atash, Ahura Mazda’s Son. Homage is also paid to the Kiyani Glory and Luster (*khoreh*) created by Ahura Mazda; to the *khoreh* of the Kiyani King Kai-Khushru and to the Glory of his *var* (enclosure). Kia-Khushru is one of the Immortals and is believed that he will come out of the secret enclosure when Shah Behram Varjavand will emerge to salvage the religion and the righteous. Homage is also paid to the Glory of Mount Asnavant, Mount Raevant, and to the Chaechst Var ‘enclosure’. (Kai-

Khushro Padshah enthroned Atash Gushnasp on **Mount Asnavant**. Kai-Vishtasp enthroned Atash Burzin Meher on **Mount Raevant**. This Fire, which burnt without producing any smoke, was brought to Earth by Paigambar Saheb Asho Zarathushtra. The Chaechst Var is an enclosure where some of our Magav Sahebs are believed to have their secret enclosure, in addition to the Damavand Kuh.)

The devotee asks Ahura Mazda to grant, through Ardibehesht Ameshaspand, wisdom and spiritual strength and seeks a vision and communion with Ahura Mazda through His Son, the Fire! The Niyayesh ends with, “May the luster and glory of all these Fires of the victorious Lord Adar Yazad, Adar Gushasp, Adar Khordad, Adar Burzin Meher, and other Adaran Sahebs as well as the sacred Fires which are installed in the Dadgahs increase! May the Glory and Luster of Atash-e Mino Karko increase! Thus ends the Atash Niyayesh. May we, as Zarthushtis, continue to worship Ahura Mazda and His Son, Atash, with faith and dedication! Atha jamyat, yatha afrinami.

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