

BOI CEREMONY AND THE CHAKRA RITUAL

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Courtesy : Burjor Daboo

RITUAL OF 'BOI-DAADAN' OR MAACHI OFFERING AT CHANGE OF GEHS IN ATASH-BEHRAMS AND ITS GREAT SIGNIFICANCE

'In the period of Haavan Geh, Haoma Yazata approached Zarathushtra (who was then) cleansing the fire (stand) from all sides and reciting the Gathas.' – (Hom Yasht 1, 1)

Note: This chapter is based on our late revered Dasturji Saheb Khurshed S. Dabu's Gujarati booklet on this subject. Comments within brackets are my own- (Ahura Mazda is omnipresent and He is mysteriously present in all His Creations, as a Ravaan/Fravashi in each one of us, and as an unseen fire energy instrumental in the creation and renovation of everything. As the 'Son of Ahura Mazda' and as his resplendent symbol the enthroned fire is worshipped. It has a soul in addition to its material counterpart and hence it is an independent, conscious entity).

MAACHI RITUAL - The efficacy of our daily prayers and religious ceremonies depends upon the Attunement which a devotee can establish with the Divine consciousness of the spiritual entity whose presence is being invoked (Ahay Raya Khwarenghacha...),). Hence before entering the holy of holies for offering service to the enthroned fire, the officiating Athravan Saheb first goes through his daily prayers for that Geh& then only he ties a 'Padaan' over his face and enters the Fire- King's Court. The other requisite is the purity of that Athravan's personal life, the must be a pious person, wedded to good thoughts, words and deeds. He must be regular in his food, sleep etc., and must always follow the middle path. In short, he must be a holy and religious Abed. (Dasturji Saheb has divided this ritual into 5 heads, which we shall now briefly study.)

1. INSTALLATION, OFFERING OF A MAACHI-

Having put on gloves, the priest prepares a throne on the altar for the holy fire and the presiding Yazata by arranging 6 sandalwood pieces by means of two tongs as under: No Maanthras are recited at this stage. At 1st facing the East, he places 2 big pieces of sandalwood on the fire keeping some space between them, parallel from East to West. Then facing the South two more pieces are put over and at right angles to the 1st mentioned pieces. The remaining 2 pieces are put at right angles over the last mentioned pieces, facing the East again.

Due to the sovereign status of Pak Iranshah Atash-Behram, a Maachi comprising 9 pieces is offered in the same way but according to the following order : (a) East to West: 2 pieces, (b) South to North : 2 pieces, (c) East to West: 4 pieces, & (d) South to North: 1 piece. Total 9 pieces. After thus forming the throne for the Atash Padshah, the priest facing the East lays 3 more pieces of sandalwood in the hollow formed in the ' centre, reciting in soundless words 'Humata' (good thoughts), 'Hukhta' (good words), and 'Hvarshta' (good deeds.)

Maachi itself means a royal throne and the 6 pieces offered symbolize its legs, seat boards and arm rests. These 6 pieces also remind us of the 6 stages in which God created the Universe, during 6 eons called 'Gahambar' periods. (Again, looking at this ritual from another point of view, the Maachi comprises 3 layers of 2 pieces each. Human existence also consists of 3 distinct layers of consciousness: Physical, Emotional and Mental. Thus a human being works on 3 planes simultaneously. A suggestion to purify our 3 Bodies- Physical, Emotional And Mental, by passing them through fiery tests, can also be seen here. Looking down from the top of the dome, the arrangement of the Maachi on the fire altar appears like 3 crosses A Multiple Blazing Cross in fact! This also supports my suggestion made above 'cross' itself means a test.

2. WASHING THE KHUWAN (STOOL OF THE ALTAR), PURIFICATION AND RECEPTION –

Having cleansed the metal water-pot thrice the hands are washed and then reciting 3 Ashem Vohu, water is poured in the metal-pot in 3 stages. Then reciting the relevant Maanthras, the stool under the Fire-altar is washed.

'Washing the King's feet' is a very old custom. In Hindu, Jewish, Christian and other scriptures references to it are found. It implies welcome with honour.

The holy outpourings of Ahura Mazda come down from the Higher Planes or Dakhyus in 3 distinct stages, passing through the Emotional and Mental Planes and then manifesting on the Physical plane. This is the occult significance behind the ritual of pouring water in the pot in 3 distinct stages. It is declared in Bundaheshn that Ahriman was brought down thrice by means of recitation of 'Yatha'. This shows the 3 stages of the Earth's solidification. In short, with the thoughts of purifying the mind, emotions and actions, Atash Padshah is welcomed by washing the feet. This ritual is indeed very ancient as can be gathered from the passage from Haoma Yasht quoted above.

3. CHAKRA RITUAL, PERAMBULATIONS AROUND THE ALTAR -

Holding 1 ladle (Chamach) in the right hand in such a way that its end rests on the other ladle kept in the left hand. Placing some sandalwood and incense on the ladle on the top, the fire receptacle is touched by the 2 joined ladles one by one at 9 different points. A certain Maanthra is recited at each point and after bowing at that point, approach is made to the next point. On arrival at the 1st or the starting point, which is also the 9th point the sandalwood and incense on the ladle are offered to the holy fire. The arrangement of these 9 points is so pregnant with meaning that a deeper study is called for.

The meanings of the relevant Maantras recited at the 9 points during perambulations around the enthroned fire are given by Dasturji Saheb Khurshed Dabu as under:

1) AA THWA AATHRA GARAYEMI - I offer my Devotional song to Thee, O Fire!

2) VANGHEUSH MANANGHO ZAOTHRAABYO YAZAMAIDE - With the gifts of good mind we worship Thee- (By means of good mind and spiritual strength, we attune with Thee.)

3) Same as (1) above.

4) VANGHEUSH UKHDHAHAY ZAOTHRABYO YAZAMAIDE - With the gifts of good words (or by means of good words and spiritual strength) we worship (attune with) Thee.

5) Same as (1) above.

6) VANGHEUSH SHYAOTHNAHAY ZAOTHRABYO YAZAMAIDE - With the gifts of good deeds (by means of good deeds and spiritual strength) we worship (attune with) Thee.

7) SOOKAI MANANGHA - I Perambulate in search of light through the Mind. (Thoughts)

8) SOOKAI VACHANGHA - I Perambulate in search of light through the Spoken Words.

9) SOOKAI SHYAOTHNA - I Perambulate in search of light through the Deeds, Performed,

On completion of these perambulations, sandalwood and incense held on the ladle are offered to the fire.

This ritual picturizes how Ahura Mazda becoming many from 1, brought forth the Cosmos and how He has placed Himself in the midst of various creations as their soul - Atash.) 3 triangles founded on the principles of Good Thoughts, Good Words And Good Deeds, are formed out of 9 points.

A reference to the Fig. will show .that the horizontal line marked 7-8 divides the circle into 2 parts: (1) SPENTA: Spirit, Increase, Reality and Life and (2) ANGRA: Matter, Decrease, Illusion and Not-Life. The thoughts, words, & deeds of these Twin Spirits are not in consonance with each other (Yasna 30.3). All creations, visible as well as invisible, come into existence only as a result of their mutual interaction. & this will go on till the end of time (Yas. 43.5)

FIG. PERAMBULATIONS DURING THE 'CHAKRA' RITUAL

This same idea is also expressed, in another way, by the 2 triangles formed by the points 4, 5 and 6, & 1, 2 and 3, respectively. These are interlaced triangles and their union brings into being a 6 pointed star. The Jews call it 'King Solomon's Seal' and they also use it as a very efficacious Talisman. The Theosophical Society as well as Sri Aurobindo Society recognize it as a very important emblem. Further, these 6 points and the enthroned Fire in the middle also symbolize the Cosmic Government comprising Ahura Mazda and His 6 Amesha Spentas.

The 9 fixed points around 1 circle and the thought of salutation & offering at each of those points, also remind us of our duty to dedicate to the holy enthroned fire, as a representative of Ahura Mazda. The 9 components of our beings enumerated in Yasna 55:1. The New Age message of Holy Zarathushtra, that it is not the animals that have to be offered as sacrifice in a Yagna /Yasna, but, one's own whole being and that real sacrifice is self- sacrifice given in the service of Ahura Mazda (Yas. 33:14), is so beautifully picturized in this ritual (URVAAN & FRAVASHI being, so to say, 2 faces of the same coin, the 9 components are indicated by 8 points. 1 & 9 being the same points.) This Chakra Ritual also typifies the Central Sun & the 8 Planets revolving around it as also the electrons revolving around a proton.

(From times immemorial a Circle, which is without beginning or end, depicts the un-manifested God (Ahu) but when the Manifested God (Mazda or Ahura Mazda) is to be indicated, a point is put in the centre of that circle. In Astronomy as well as Astrology the Sun (the Solar Logos) is symbolized by such a circle with a point in the centre.. In the Science of Numbers, again, this fact is depicted by 1; 01; 10 & 101.. Once again, the same mystic truth is brought before our eyes in the form of the round border of the fire altar vessel and the enthroned fire in the centre!) Finally, out of the Maantras recited during the Chakra ritual; 3 Speak of Devotion; 3 of Offering the Gift, and 3 of the Light of Wisdom.

Thus the main purpose behind this beautiful ritual is to make us understand through Devotion, Action and Wisdom the profound workmanship of Ahura Mazda, viz. the Creation. And these are also the 3 main Paths to reach God, as pointed out in 'Yatha Ahu Vairyo.' If you refer to the Fig., once again you will notice that the Triangle formed by the lines joining the points 1, 2 and 3 has its Apex pointing Downwards. It is a symbol of the Physical Trinity'; whereas the Triangle formed by the points 4, 5 and 6 has its Apex pointing Above. Signifying the Divine Trinity of Ahura, Vohuman and Asha in which Ahura Mazda first manifested, (see Bundaheshn).

(Even the Atash-Paatra (Receptacle) consists of two triangles in a rather crude form. The foundation triangle has its apex pointing above, while the triangular portion, which holds the fire, has its apex below. The divine outpourings coming from the higher planes, are received by the holy fire. This is the lesson indirectly taught to us even by this Paatra (receptacle) of Fire! And both these Triangles are connected at the middle of the 'Paatra').

Our Triune consciousness can become at-one with Ahura Mazda on reaching the 9th or highest point, which is the stage of Cosmic Attunement at which there is a perfect union of the Physical Body, Emotions & Mind (i.e. Personality) ~ Soul, Conscience and Farohar (i.e. Individuality), & Will, Wisdom and Love (i.e. Divinity). This is another message imparted to us by the Chakra ritual. There are 3 distinct stages of reaching Ahura Mazda (i) His Vision (Daresama), (ii) Our Perambulations around Him (Pairi-Jamyama). and (iii) Atonement with Him in Divine Friendship, (Hamem-Hakhma). This second stage of perambulations is demonstrated by the Chakra ritual.

4.. RITUAL OF 'BOI DAADAN', OFFERING OF INCENSE.

On completion of the Chakra Ritual, the priest holding sandalwood and incense in a ladle, starts reciting Atash Niyash 'in silent words' (in Baj) and on coming to the words 'DUSHMATA' (Evil Thoughts), 'DUZUKHTA' (Evil Words), and 'DUZVARSHTA' (Evil Deeds) he strikes the bell in 3 sets of 3 each, 9 in all. Whilst reciting the phrase 'PA PATET HOM' (i.e. I Retrace my Steps from Evil), he offers the sandalwood and incense to the holy fire. Thereafter he recites aloud the remaining portion of the Niyash.

The sounding of the bell 9 times has many significances:

(a) We are reminded of the necessity of driving away evil forces (Drujs). Whilst pounding the Haoma Twigs when the 'Laala' is struck over the 'Haavaneem', appropriate Maanthras for driving away Drujs are recited. By means of this tolling of the bell all interferences by evil forces with the royal authority of fire are nullified..

(b) Making of such numbered Sounds, Knocks and Clappings as in Vanant Yasht, are well known modes of invoking assistance from invisible elemental spirits working on the good side of nature.

(c) Attention of people residing in the locality is drawn to the fact that a new Geh has already started, to enable them to perform Kashti and/or other rituals!

(d) As we have already noted above, a 'Point of Contact' or 'Paevand' comes into existence between the holy fire and the bell through the priest whose one hand holds a ladle on the Paatra of Fire and the other hand is on the bell; thus an unseen circuit is formed there. We have already seen the ' Pahlavi Text which clearly affirms that at the time of change of Gehs, the Holy Yazats hold their meetings at the fire temples and leave their beneficent blessings there. which are absorbed by the fire & when the bell is tolled, these blessings reach the devotees present there, as also to outsiders, through the hands and body of the priest, along with the sound waves emanating from the bell. Sharing of the divine blessings by the devotees seems to me to be the primary function of the tolling of the bell at change of Gehs.

(e) By the tolling of the bell radiations are sent out over the locality; 'but, in addition to the sounds we hear, the harmonics of its notes affect us all subconsciously, even if we do not hear them.) It must specially be noted that the Gehs Change Always at Their Own Appointed Hours and NOT at The Time when the Boi Ritual is performed and the bell is tolled

5.. 'KARSH' FORTIFICATION.. –

This ritual is performed at the time when the passage to a cross is formed in such a way that the handle of the ladle held in the right hand is on the handle of the ladle in the left hand. The end of the ladle in the left moves over the 'Rakhiya' on the Paatra and the other ladle moves above in the air! Two swift perambulations around the holy fire are now made, reciting one Yatha at each time, and holding the ladle throughout on the 'Rakhiya'.

As usual, these perambulations are always made in such a way that The Altar is Always On The Right Hand Side Of The Priest. Even otherwise, in the Holy of Holies, the priests are supposed to move about in such a way that the Holy Fire is always on their Right. (Even we, laymen, should whilst entering or retiring from an Atash Kadeh see to it that as far as possible the Padshah is always on our right, and our movements are made parallel to the walls of the building which is usually oriented due North-South. This is very important; otherwise, the movement of vibrations in the temple would be disturbed. This is also the practice prevalent in all occult and mystical societies-)

In this last stage, after offering the 'Boi', an invisible Maanthric shield is made around the throne with due devotion and loyalty, to the end and intent that the purity of the aura of the holy place may be preserved until the next change of Geh. (Drawing of 'Karshas' is a very unique teaching of the Mazdayasni Zarathushtrian Daena. Its purpose is two-fold; (i) The Inner Atmosphere may not become impure, and (ii) Impurity from outside may not enter within the demarcated place. (In Iran in ancient times there was a practice of drawing 3, 6 or 9 'Karshas' on the ground and sitting in the middle of the circuit thus formed whilst performing Attunement (Yasna) with Holy Yazats and other Spiritual /Entities as also whilst practising the 'Amal' of any Nirang. This is clearly hinted at in Khordad Yasht, which states that the only difference between a holy person and a dravand is that the former recites Maanthras, and protects his body by drawing a Karsha.)

The ladle in the right hand is placed on the ladle in the left hand: ultimately, Truth and Righteousness will vanquish Falsehood and Impurity. The ladle in the left hand is on the 'Rakhiya' (matter) and that in the right hand is held in the air authority of the invisible world over the visible. 'Mind over Matter' and of the immoral soul over the physical body.

The formation of a 'Cross' also teaches us that human existence is a mixture of happiness and sorrow. We get happiness if we follow the right path, but 'evil food' (Dush-Myazd or sorrow will have to be suffered if we follow the wrong path. (Law of Keshash 'Akem Akai' - Action and Reaction).

This symbol of cross is very ancient & pre-dates Lord Jesus Christ. It can be seen drawn on ancient temple walls in Egypt. The symbol of 'Swastika' derived from the cross was quite well known in ancient Iran particularly during Parthian times as has now been discovered by archaeologists.

FINAL THOUGHTS. - If we compare human soul with the enthroned Fire and the physical body with an Atash Kadeh. We learn very' important lessons from the ritual described above:

(a) Soul/Fravashi as a part of God is enthroned within each one of us. It alone is our true guide; hence we must keep its temple, our body, pure and unsullied, so that our life may become resplendent and honourable.

(b) Service to the soul, viz. the moving friend (body) brings 'dry wood' for the inner fire (soul) i.e. follows the tarikat for purity so that all dross in the form of anger, lust, jealousy etc. may get burnt and destroyed and the soul may get strength. The physics atmosphere and aura have to be purified by the waters of Truth (Ashem). The inner: fire should be made resplendent by selfless service to humanity (dry Kathi)

(c) The Chakra ritual and the thoughts arising from it can also be applied to human souls. We should try to understand God better and for that the first requisite is self-knowledge.. On the portal of a Greek temple at Delphi the following message was engraved, 'Man Know thyself'. So we must 'perambulate' around ourselves and constantly observe our mind, emotions and conduct. By developing the inner triangle we must try to attain the pinnacle of consciousness (referred to in our religious texts as the heights of Mount Ushi- Darena) and become worthy of Attunement with Ahura Mazda.)

(d) We must always pay heed to the silent voice of our soul. (Tolling of the inner 'bell.') & programme our life in accordance with it; from time to time try to listen to the 'Boi' ritual of the inner temple, for the safety of our existence lies therein; keep on offering at the inner altar the incense-like virtuous life, so that the fragrance of our life may make our brethren happy and joyous. When the divine light manifests as a result of the inner 'Boi' ritual, the intelligence of the wise persons, devotion of the devotees, and service of the Darvesh increase and blossom forth.

(e) In order that unwelcome guests; like lust, anger, greed and other vices, may not enter without our permission, through the open door of our mind. A strong fortification has to be made around the 'throne' of our own soul, by a veritable 'shield' of astral or mental matter, as the need may arise to protect our physical as well as subtle bodies:

AHUNEM VAIRIM TANOOM PAITI, the shield (= Vara) created by the recitation of Ahun and other Maanthras protects our body (= Tanoom). If this is not done, our spiritual progress becomes hindered and the safety of the 'Inner Ruler Immortal' is endangered. We should always lead our life wide awake.

A true Athravan is a faithful shepherd of his laity, the Behdins (i.e. those with (Beh) Good (Din, Daena.) Conscience/Religion It is his duty to see that the fire of religion is always kept burning within them. By doing so, he surely earns the blessings of the Holy Fire. (Alas, it pains us to note that a very few misguided priests whose duty it is to toll the bell to stop the Behdins from falling into slumber, are seen nowadays clandestinely performing inter-community marriages. Unless this rot is stopped forthwith, the last stronghold of our ancient religion is in danger of collapsing).

At the end only the 'Rakhiya' remains on the altar which is offered to those present as the 'bearer of divine blessings' - If we leave behind us sacred 'Rakhiya' in the form of a life well spent in service of Ahura Mazda, it will guide our devoted co-religionists in posterity.

WHAT DOES THE 'RAKHIYA' TEACH US? –

a) 'All my pride and arrogance will be reduced to ashes. So let me do away with worldly attractions and humbly surrender myself to God'. ~ HUMILITY.

b) 'This Rakhiya is the dust under Thy angelic throne. I am a humble servant of the Angel of Fire. So applying that dust on my forehead I acknowledge my loyalty towards Him as well as towards the inner Fire within me' ~ LOYALTY.

c) 'The offerings given by all, the rich and the poor, Amir or Fakir at last turn into this self-same 'Rakhiya'. 'So let me develop within me a true feeling of brotherliness and love towards all fellow beings without any distinction' ~ BROTHERHOOD.

d) Just as all sandalwood offered to the Holy Fire; whether worth Rs. 25 or 25 Paisa, burn in the same flame and keep the fire alive, in the same way good result always accrues from right endeavours of all. 'Oh Fire, when you will kindly accept and then burn away all my thoughts, words and deeds, with the accompanying dross of impurities, then I will only be receiving in my purified and sanctified life the results of my own Keshash or Karma' ~ TRANSMUTATION AND RETRIBUTION.

(The word 'Keshash' is derived from 'Kartaar' or 'Kerdaar' (in Avesta R +- T = Sh) or 'Keshaar' i.e. Keshash- The Iranian word 'Keshash' has the positive sense of a 'doer', whereas the Hindu term 'Karma', i.e., a deed, has the negative sense of 'a thing done').

e) 'I have to observe all religious injunctions faithfully and unflinchingly and live my life in accordance therewith ~ OBEDIENCE

f) This 'Rakhiya' coming as it does from your Throne, is a veritable Talisman and an 'Aalaat' and through its instrumentality I form an invisible 'paevand' - Point of contact with you. May my body receive life and purity through this pure 'Rakhiya', so that thereby it too may become a 'Talesam' having received illumination through that Rakhiya ~ REFINEMENT, INFLUENCE.'

It is but fair to repeat here that this whole Chapter is adapted by me from the illuminating booklet in Gujarati written by the late revered Dasturji Saheb Khurshed- S. Dabu entitled 'Atash-Kadeh-ni Khidmat-Bandagi'. If there are any shortcomings in my English rendering, the fault is mine. May his soul rest in eternal peace! The portions within brackets () are my own humble comments.

FROM 'IN SEARCH OF DIVINE LIGHT' – BEHRAMSHA PITHAWALA PGS 50 TO 58

ALSO SEE 'ATASH BEHRAM BOI CEREMONY' FOR MORE DETAILS..

<https://zoroastrians.net/2015/12/06/atah-behram-buoy-ceremony-by-behram-dhabhar/>

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE READERS. THE TERM 'BOI', IS TAKEN FROM THE WORD 'KHUSH-BOI' (FRAGRANCE). AS WE ARE OFFERING INCENSE & SU-KHAD (GOOD-WOOD), WHICH PERMEATES THE ATMOSPHERE WITH FRAGRANCE.*

**ALSO NOTE:- FOR IRANSHAH ATASHBEHRAM THERE ARE 9 PIECES OF MACHI, IN PLACE OF 6 IN OTHER ATASHBEHRAMS + BELLS ARE RUNG FOR 10 TIMES IN PLACE OF 9. THE EXTRA ONE BEING IN THE NAME OF 'DAADAAR AHURAMAZDA'}*