

IT IS BETTER TO
LIGHT A CANDLE
THAN TO
CURSE THE
DARKNESS

THE MAZDAYASNIE CONNECTION

July 15, 2021

Zoroastrian

Earth Day

By Ervad Marzban J. Hathiram

Friday, July 16, 2021, is *Spendarmad nu Parab* (Spendarmad Mah and Spendarmad Roj) in the Shahenshahi calendar. *Spendarmad* (Avesta *Spenta Armaiti*) is the Amesha Spenta specifically designated to look after Mother Earth. Readers are requested to pray *Spendarmad ni Setayash* to seek her blessings on this day.

Roj Spendarmad, Mah Spendarmad (Spendarmad Parab) is a spiritually vital and important day of the Zoroastrian calendar. Long before the shrill cries of the eco-brigade began to be heard, the practices and precepts of our ancient faith were already attuned to green living, carbonless footprint and eco-sensitiveness.

Spendarmad (Avesta *Spenta Armaiti*) is the Amesha Spenta specifically designated to look after Mother Earth. Through her associates and co-workers, *Geush Urva* and *Geush Tashan*, Spenta Armaiti patiently bears the weight of the immeasurable levels of spiritual and physical pollution generated by man over the ages.

Spenta Armaiti is also responsible for the fertility of the earth, working along with Khordad, who looks after the waters, and Amardad, who looks after vegetation and crops. These great forces of Ahura Mazda's Divine Cabinet work silently in the background, providing things which we take for granted today.

Roj Spendarmad, Mah Spendarmad is also the **Day of the Farmer**. A few decades ago, when many Parsis were engaged in agriculture, this day was celebrated with great solemnity and reverence. The Parsi farmers would call their family priests to their *wadis* to consecrate a special Baj, in honor of Spenta Armaiti, or perform a thanksgiving Jashan.

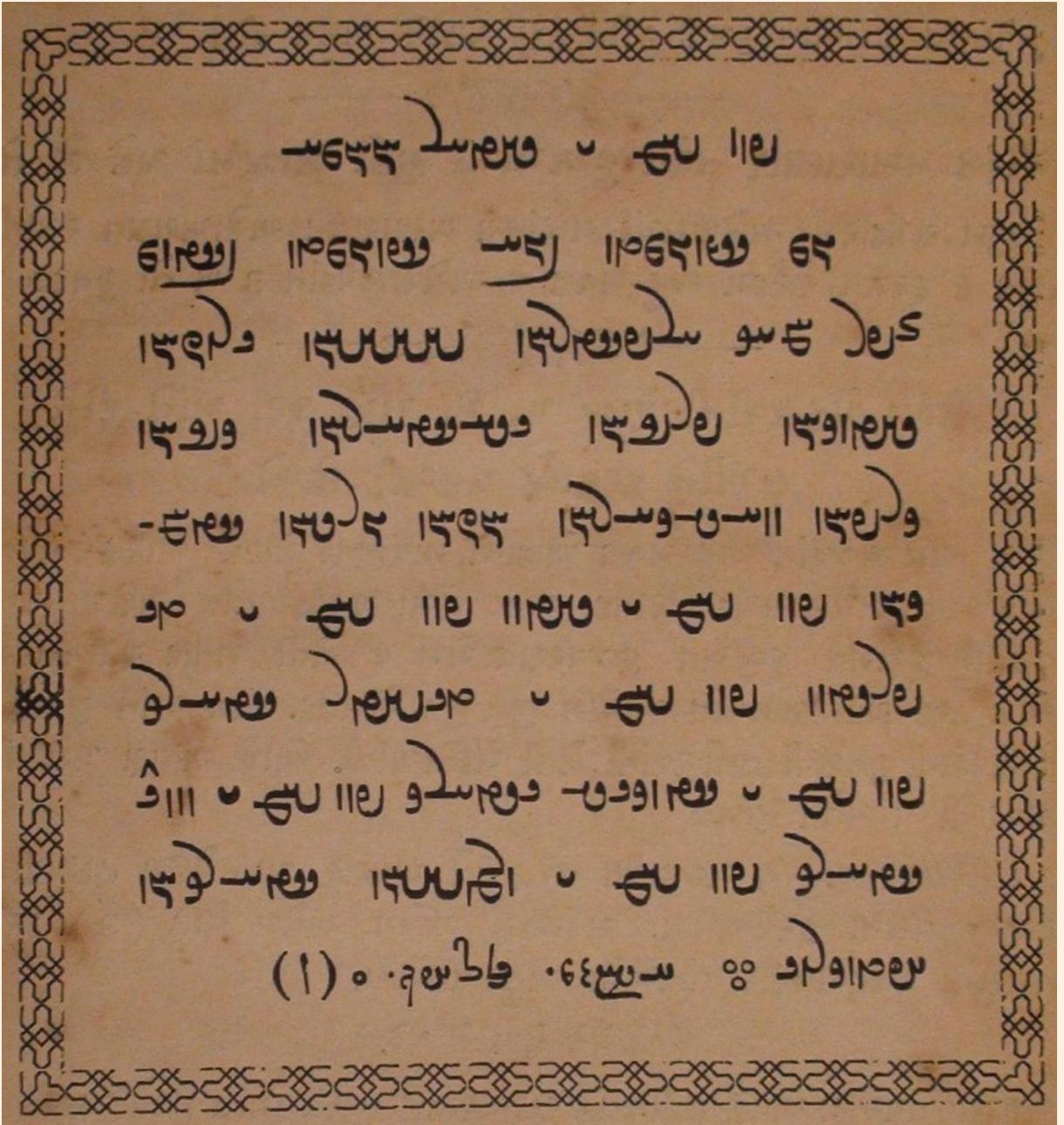
A more important spiritual practice followed by our ancestors was the writing of the special Nirang, or potent spiritual formula, called '*Nirang-i-Khrafastar Zadan*'. Spiritually evolved priests would collect some yellow paper, make special red ink using saffron and well water, take a nib pen and then sit down with all these implements in the *Urvis Gah* (the sacred place in the Fire Temple where the Pav Mahel ceremonies are performed). They would then take four *Daran* and consecrate the Baj of *Teshtar Tir Yazata*. After finishing the Baj, they would partake the *Chasni*, breaking off small bits from each *Darun* in a specific manner and eating them in a pure way. Then they would take the pen, dip it in the saffron ink and start writing the special Nirang in the Pazend script. Having finished the Nirang, they would hold it over the fire and fumigate the paper. These Nirangs were then given to the devotees who would affix the Nirang above the door of their house.

This Nirang has great potency to stop the entry of any kind of noxious or evil influence into the house (which is why it was affixed outside the door and not inside). The words used in the Nirang describe how its sacred formula binds the mouths (that is, renders powerless) all kinds of wicked sorcerers, evil magicians, liars, cheats, evil-doers, serpent-like persons and any other evil influences. In doing so, the Nirang takes the help of **Shah Faridun Athavyan**, the great Peshdadian monarch, Greatest Healer and Saheb of all Nirangs. Many Nirangs that we use even today are ascribed to this very highly evolved spiritual monarch.

In addition to Shah Faridun, the Nirang calls for the help of four specific entities, which are translated by scholars as stars: **Tir, Vanant, Satavas** and **Haptoiring**. Ustad Saheb Behramshah Shroff explained that these names may point to the physical stars of the almanac, but they actually refer to the great spiritual and divine forces which are behind the working of the stars and planets. Thus, *Teshtar Tir Yazata* performs a vital function in the cosmos, a physical replica of which is found in the star Sirius in the East

of the heavens. Similarly, Satavas works in the West, Haptoiring in the North and Vanant in the South. They are like four sentries at the four comers of the cosmos, keeping a watch on any evil activity and stepping in to ensure that things do not go out of hand.

Thus, the Nirang affixed on the doors of Parsi houses invoked the help not only of Shah Faridun, but also these four great sentinels and provided the family with protection from any evil and untoward incident throughout the year.



Above: Nirang-i-Khrafastar Zadan in Pahlavi script. Must be handwritten and affixed over the entrance door of the residence on Spendarmad Mah and Roj Spendarmad.

Every Roj Spendarmad, Mah Spendarmad, the old Nirang would be taken down and burnt in the house fire or given to the priest and replaced with the new one.

When I was Panthaky at the Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff Daremeher, in Oshiwara, Mumbai, we had continued this important tradition and nearly a hundred Parsis, from Behram Baug and even outside Mumbai came to the Daremeher and collected their Nirangs. This shows that there is a great demand within our community for spiritual guidance and help, which is not being met properly. This is one reason why Parsis flock to other religions and their practices.

There exists a vast treasure of Nirangs and ceremonies which can help a Parsi in any kind of difficulty. But for them to be effective, certain religious prerequisites must be adhered to. Our greatest spiritual gifts of the Sudreh and Kusti are mangled into fashion statements. We take them off at the slightest excuse. We do not follow simple practices which nobody can stop us from following in the comfort of our homes. How can our Nirangs and ceremonies help, when the basic infrastructure needed for their success is absent?

Light a *Divo*, and it will radiate spiritual warmth and brilliance. Place it in a jar and cover it. What happens? As the oxygen is used up, the Diva starts spluttering and will ultimately go off. Is it the fault of the Diva, or is it the oxygen-less surrounding it was placed in, which caused it to extinguish? We blame our prayers and our ceremonies for having no effect, but how can they be effective when we have sucked out the Zoroastrian oxygen from our lives?

Fellow Zoroastrians! Unless we inculcate a Zoroastrian way of life in our homes, there can be no spiritual progress. On this spiritually important day, let us resolve to inculcate more and more Zoroastrian values in our lives - truth, fair dealing, compassion, ethics and great love and devotion towards Ahura Mazda and His Prophet Zarathushtra. This is the only way towards salvation. As the Avesta says:

Aevo pantao yo ashahe, vispe anyaesham apantam

There is only one path – the path of Truth and Righteousness, all others are non-paths.

For informative and educative reading, please visit
www.frashogard.com