



NORTH AMERICAN MOBED COUNCIL **NEWSLETTER** **ATHRAVAN**

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Presidents Message:

Athravans of North America has discussed among themselves about Merits of different CALENDERS in our Religion. As we know most of our religious festivities and rituals does not fall on correct time of the season if we follow Shanshai or Kadmi calendar. We would like to hear your opinions on this subject. Let's have a debate based on our scriptures and not on emotions. Is there any *Techi* among all of us who could volunteer to start and manage a chat room or some instrument like that so Mobeds of North America can express their opinion for all to read?

Please send all your remarks to me at kzarolia@ca.inter.net

Barshnum

Ervad Gustad M. Panthaki

Zoroastrianism stresses purity of mind, body and elements. It is clearly stated *yaozdao mashyai aipi zathem vahista* meaning purity (is) the best (thing) for man from birth (Ys. 48:5, Vd. 5:21 & 10.18). A physical foundation of purity naturally contributes to a purity of the mind, as the body is its temple.

There are three important purificatory rituals enjoined in Zoroastrianism: Padyab, Nahn, and Bareshnum. The Padyab is most common and can be performed by any individual, without the aid of a priest. The Padyab is performed as a ritual after common circumstances where one encounters defilement, such as upon returning from the toilet. The Nahn is a higher type purification ritual conducted with the aid of a priest, in circumstances marking transition or passage in life, such as prior to the Navjote or before the marriage ceremony.

The Bareshnum is derived from the Avestan word "*bareshnu*" meaning top, height, head. The Vendidad 8:40, states that the Bareshnum must begin from the top of the head. The Bareshnum was originally conducted to purify those who had come in contact with the worst form of impurity, a dead body. Up until the middle of the last century, those who occupied the profession of corpse bearer, were initiated with the Bareshnum and had Bareshnum conducted upon retirement. The detail of the whole process is given in the Vendidad 9:1-57.

In contemporary times, the Bareshnum serves as an initiation rite and as prerequisite for certain liturgical ceremonies. For example, the Bareshnum is necessary for Navar, Murtab and prior to performing the boi ceremony of an Atash Behram. A Bareshnum ceremony consists of nine days during which they are quarantined, kept away from fire, water, cultivated land, trees, men and women. The initiate must pray five times a day, eat at fixed hours during daylight and prior to sunset, and meditate upon good thoughts. This illustrates, as aforementioned, that the Bareshnum purifies both body and mind. Indeed, the modern day practice of “retreat” contains the principle of the Bareshnum, in a different context and setting.

Some question the continued practice of Bareshnum, owing to its physical discomfort or lack of contemporary relevance. However, the Bareshnum is a ritual which also develops discipline and reflective contemplation. It is an excellent ancient custom to continue.

Quo Vadis (Whither Thou Goest?) My Fellow Mobeds? **Ervad Soli P. Dastur**

Have you ever wondered what’s going on when more than 3-4 Mobeds are praying in a Jashan together? The lead Joti may be wondering about his recitation alone! Rathwi is busy tending the fire! And the rest are in a race to finish the Atash Nyayesh, or to make sure they are heard above all others! Where Oh Where is the harmony of praying together!

In my 50+ years of Mobedi practice, I have classified these participating Mobeds in roughly three categories:

1. They can’t wait to finish the prayer they are reciting! I wonder if they know what they are praying!
2. And the laggards; sometimes you think they want to lag behind all others so they have the last say when a verse or prayer is finished by others. All others follow the principle: The Caravan moves with the slowest camel!
3. And the entrepreneurs: they seem to be the first to recite the next word after all have completed a verse or prayer.

And in all this cacophony of voices, the supposed to be the leader, Joti, is lost somewhere without the leadership that he is responsible for in leading the prayers, in making sure all are cooperating in praying together, in stopping at correct places inside a verse, etc. etc. etc.

What happened to that time honored practice of Hum Kalaam (to be together in prayers), Hum Sharik (to participate in the same prayer together), Hamaa Zor (to be united), Hum Bandagi (to pray together)! I am sure this essay will offend some of my Mobed friends; if so, I apologize. However, I feel like we should do something to make our praying together a great experience and all feel proud to be participating in it.

So, here are my personal thoughts on this subject and I would be very happy to have a dialog started on this subject:

The Role of Joti

1. He is the key person to guide all others to pray together in unison. It is a good idea for him before the prayers to gather all Mobeds and instruct them to pray together with him and follow his lead.

2. He should be the person who sets the tone of each prayer to be prayed by all with a strong leadership in reciting the prayers with authenticity so others get the point to follow him instead of drifting in their own world of praying.
3. To be that kind of a leader, Joti has to know all prayers well and set an example by leading all others. He should know where to stop in a verse, stop after each verse and make sure all others follow his lead.
4. When a Mobed is one of the three categories mentioned above, he could look at him and make gestures with index fingers of both hands to let him know to pray together.

The Role of All Other Mobeds

1. They all should follow the Joti and pray in unison.
2. When the Mobed next to him is one of the three categories mentioned above, he could look at him and make gestures with index fingers of both hands to let him know to pray together like Joti should do.
3. They should accept that all cannot be Jotis. There is one selected and their duty is to follow him.

These are some of my thoughts on this subject and I will be very happy to discuss this further with my Mobed friends.

*For more Information or submission of any articles in NAMC Newsletter,
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