



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

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## ***Presidents Message:***

I would personally like to wish Happy New Year & Happy Holidays to all our members and their families as we enter 2012. I look forward to another successful year for the NAMC. Please send your \$25 NAMC membership fees to our treasurer T. Mirza.

## **GÂHAMBÂR** ***by Ervad Tehemton Mirza***

***“Maidhyozarem Gâhambâr Jashan (S) will be held at our centre on October 1, 2011”***

- a typical news announcement in a North American Zoroastrian Association Newsletter

We would not skate in Rideau Canal in mid June or enjoy May 24 weekend in mid January. Wouldn't it will be foolish to look for fall colours in April or spring thaw in October? Then why do we celebrate Maidhyozarem (Mid-Spring) Gâhambâr in early fall?

Let us examine:

Gâhambârs are six periods of 5 days set aside in every Zarthosti calendar year.

The root and meaning of the Gâhambârs indicate that they are festivals of “seasons”.

Sir J.J. Modi indicates that though the word “Gâtuhambar” in Avesta corresponds to the word Gâhambâr, the word “Yâiryâ” (Yasna 1,9) carries the same meaning. “Yâiryâ” is believed to be the predecessor of the English word “year”, and means “seasonal division of the year”. The word Gâhambâr originates from Pahlavi Gâsânâbâr and is derived from root gâ (to go). He thinks that the word Gâhambâr means “collection (ambâr) of time (gâh)” i.e. “the full time”, “the proper (season) time”.

According to Dastur Dhalla, Gâhambârs represent seasonal changes of a year during which Ahura Mazda successfully created his creations.

Visparad and Bundelesh refers to Gâhambârs as “seasonal festivals’

Since King Jamshed is believed to have been the first monarch to celebrate Gâhambâr, the celebration of Gâhambâr is as ancient as the celebration of Nao-Rooz.

Name	Meaning	Creation	Days of year	Gregorian calendar (based on Fasli calendar)
Maidhyozarem	Mid-spring	Heaven (Sky)	41-45	April 30 - May 4
Maidhyoshemn	Mid-summer	Water	101-105	June 29 - July 3
Paitishayem	Harvest time	Earth	176-180	Sept 12 - Sept 16
Ayathrem	Prosperity	Vegetation	206-210	Oct 12 - Oct 16
Maidhyarem	Mid-winter	Animal	286-290	Dec 31 - Jan 4
Hamaspathmadeem	Middle path (Vernal Equinox)	Man	361-365	Mar 16 - Mar 20

The purpose of Gâhambâr celebration is to offer thanksgiving to Ahura Mazda for all his blessings and his creations (sky, water, earth, vegetation, animal and human)

“Âfargân-e- Gâhambâr” declares that a Zarhosti is to deem his or her duty to pray (yazad), perform (sâzad), eat (khûrad) or give (déhad) at Gâhambârs, and contribute based on his financial strength towards the communal Gâhambâr celebrations. The really needy are to be allowed to participate free of charge to allow them to remember and thank their creator.

Gâhambâr celebrations consist of two distinct segments:

Liturgical segment consists of ceremonial recital of Âfargân-e- Gâhambâr and Bâj of Gâhambâr, with an optional recitation of Visparad and Pâvi of Gâhambâr. In modern day Gâhambâr celebrations, the optional liturgy is mostly omitted. The liturgical segment allows a Mobed to lead his congregation in prayer to thank Ahura Mazda for his creations and for regularity of seasons that the earth depends on for its prosperity.

Celebratory segment consists of a feast, either sponsored by a family or a group of individuals in memory of their departed loved ones, or a communal feast with a voluntary contribution to the cost of the feast. This feast is designed to congregate Zarhostis in a simple communal feast irrespective of their wealth, education, social standing or political views, with a view to promote communal fellowship and to signify that all humans are equal in the eyes of their creator.

Zarhostis who follow the Fasli calendar would celebrate Gâhambârs during the appropriate seasonal change.

With the Kadmi and Shanshai calendars deviating from the traditional and more seasonally in tune Fasli calendar, significant numbers of Zarhostis now celebrate Gâhambârs at inopportune times of the year.

(e.g. though Maidhyozarem Gâhambâr celebrates mid-spring, Zarhostis following Kadmi or Shanshai calendar celebrate it in late summer or early fall.)

Is it reasonable to continue this practice?

Under the leadership of Mobeds of North America and under the auspices of the North American Mobed Council, the laity could be guided to celebrate Gâhambârs at the opportune time of the year and thereby make them more meaningful in their prayers and more relevant to the Zarhostis of North America.

## **Asho Zarathushtra sings Yenghe Hâtâm** **in Gatha Vohu Khshathra Ys. 51.22**

### **Ervad Soli P. Dastur**

Our three prayers of Yathâ, Ashem and Yenghe Hâtâm are the pillars of our religion. However, do you know that Zarathushtra first sang original Yenghe Hâtâm in his Gathas – Gatha Vohu Khshathra Yasna (Ys.) 51.22? Let us compare these two prayers side by side:

Ys. 51.22	Translation	Yenghe Hâtâm	Translation
Yehyâ moi ashât hachâ vahisstem ýesnê paitî, vaêdâ mazdâo ahurô!  Yôi âongharechâ heñtichâ, tâ ýazâi khvâish nâmênîsh pairichâ jasâi vañtâ.	The Wise God knows best any person of mine for the veneration done in accordance with righteousness.  I shall, on my part, venerate such persons, passed away or living, by their names and shall lovingly encircle them.	Yenghe hâtâm â-at yesneh paiti vangho, Mazdâo Ahuro vaethâ ashât hachâ yâonghâm- châ, Tâns-châ tâos-châ yazamaideh.	Indeed Mazda Ahura, the Wise God, knows better any person among men and women for their veneration.  We, on our part, venerate all such men and women.

In his scholarly opus: The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra, Dr. Irach Taraporewala writes:

“This verse is the original of the Yenghe-Hâtâm verse. The main difference between the two is that in the Gâthâ verse the holy men both past and present are spoken of, while in the later Yenghe Hâtâm verse the Righteous ones both men and women have been mentioned. The first half of the Gâthâ verse has been reproduced almost word for word, with only the later changes of grammar and spelling.

“There are, however, two main changes : (i) the moi (I) is replaced by Hâtâm (among the living beings) and (ii) the superlative vahisstem (the best) is replaced by the positive vangho (the better). The introduction of Hâtâm in the later version has probably been the reason why the idea of the past and present generations has been left out. The second half of the Yenghe-Hâtâm is entirely different. The idea of bringing in both men and women is a decided improvement. On the other hand the last two sentences have been practically omitted and so the later verse Yenghe-Hâtâm has lost a great deal of the force and beauty of the original.”

In this Vohu Khshathra Gatha Ys. 51.22, Zarathushtra started the unique custom of remembering his disciples and past stalwarts of the Religion by name! In Farvardin Yasht (FY), in the famous Yāo Visādh Kardā (FY 50), the Fravashis recite:

“Kahê no idha nām āghairyāt”

“Who will remember us by our names?” echoing Zarathushtra’s Vohu Khshathra Gatha (Ys. 51.22) verse. Some scholars think that

“nām āghairyāt” may have been corrupted to “Nām Gharan“ in Gujarati by Parsi Mobeds which is the word used by them to refer to the family booklet containing a list of the departed family members names to be used in Āfringān/Jashan ceremonies.

In this respect, Dr. Taraporewala states:

“Yt. 13 (Farvardln) is a long list of over three hundred names of holy men and women of early Zoroastrian history. In the Zoroastrian ritual today connected with funerals (third-day ceremonies) and with thanksgiving (Jashan) ceremonies there is a general list of names from ancient Iranian saga and history, and it is followed by a list of names from Parsi history since the arrival in India. Then there follows a special list of local celebrities, the names being agreed upon by the local community. Each family also has its own list of names embodying the family history. On the death of any well-known personage, a special meeting of the whole local community is convened and, if the majority wills it, his or her name is added to the list of the 'illustrious ones who have passed on'. There is a sort of 'hero-worship' and this custom is of considerable psychological value for the community in general and for the younger generation in particular.”

This whole paraphrasing of Gatha verse brings up an interesting question: How many other Gatha verses were paraphrased like the above?

And we seem to count Yenghe Hātām as one of our three prayer pillars together with Yathā and Ashem; then why can't we recite Zarathushtra's own words Ys. 51.22 instead of Yenghe Hātām sometimes in our Hum Bandagis? Let me leave this thought with my learned Mobeds!

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