

# NAMC BARESHNUM Paper

(September 10, 2020)

**This paper is published by The North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) to outline the processes of Zoroastrian ritual purification in the North American setting.**

## **Preface:**

### **Consecration of Gaomez, Bareshnum and Ādarān Fire**

Our NAMC Distinguished Scholar, Mobed Cawas Desai, has published a detailed scholarly background on the origin, history and practice of Gaomez, Bareshnum and consecration of Ādarān Fire. [\(Please see the attached\).](#)

It is noteworthy that Mobed Desai commences his observations with the following remark:

*“The purpose of this Paper is to explain the North American Mobed Council’s position on the subject of the requirements to consecrate an Ādarān Fire in North America.”*

*“It should be mentioned up front and in no uncertain terms, that when, not if, steps are taken to consecrate a fire in North America, NAMC will come under severe criticism from some of our fellow co-religionists, both in India and here in North America. When all the criticisms are boiled down to their essentials, they will devolve over one point, “ālāt” and its consecration, and all ceremonies using non-consecrated “ālāt” being vitiated and therefore, null and void.”*

In his scholarly document, Mobed Desai gives us a detailed review of the practice of Nirang and Gaomez. In this document, we will use his deductions from his exhaustive references.

In summary, Mobed Desai establishes that the practice of imbibing and use of Nirang and Gaomez during our Bareshnum and Nahān ceremonies may be of much later occurrence, following the time of Vendidad or later, or may even be after our ancestors migrated to India and adopted some practices of the Hindus.

For Bareshnum, Mobed Desai surmises that Vendidad prescribes Bareshnum only to purify persons who came in contact with dead matter or for a woman who had a stillborn child. Later on, it was also adapted as a pre-requisite for all Mobeds to perform higher liturgical ceremonies.

For this Bareshnum publication, NAMC has relied on scholarly books on this subject by Pavri, Unvalla and JJ Modi. Every attempt is made to follow the current Bareshnum practices in India but adapted, for practical purposes, to North American environment.

NAMC acknowledges the significant contributions made to this publication by NAMC Distinguished Scholars: Ervad Soli Dastur, Ervad Jehan Bagli, Ervad Gustad Panthaki, Ervad Cawas Desai, Ervad Adi Unwalla and also by Ervad Jal Panthaky.

## Zoroastrian Ritual Purification Process:

Zoroastrian practice has 3 levels of purification process.

### A. PĀDYĀB:

**Pādyāb** (Avestā “Paityāp” from *paiti-āp*, Pahlavi *pādyāv*) meaning “throwing water (āb) over (paiti) the exposed parts of the body” is the simplest and basic form of purification. It involves cleansing exposed parts of the body.

**Pādyāb** is usually performed as a part of a Kusti prayer. The entire process is known as “**Pādyāb-Kusti**” and it involves:

- Recitation of “**Khshnaōthra Ahureh Mazdāō**” (I do this for the pleasure of Ahura Mazda)
- Recitation of Ashem Vohū
- Performance of Pādyāb (Wash and wipe exposed parts of the body)
- Completion of the process by performing Kusti (untie and re-tie Kusti with recital of Kusti prayers)

**Pādyāb-Kusti** is performed before entering an Ātash Gāh and before saying prayers.

Mobeds also perform **Pādyāb-Kusti** while under ritual purity (**Bareshnum**) on rising from the bed, after answering calls of nature, before taking meals, before saying prayers and before performing any religious ceremony.

### B. NAHĀN

**Nahān** (Sanskrit Snān) meaning “ablution or bathing”, is used for a higher level of purification and is administered by a Mobed.

**Nahān is undertaken to cleanse the candidate’s**

- inner body (by consuming Āb-e-Anār),
- outer body (by taking a bath or a shower), and
- mind (by reciting prayers during the process)

### THE NAHĀN PROCESS INVOLVES:

- Pādyāb-Kusti**
- Take a **Jamwā-ni Bāj** (recital of prayer of grace said before meals)
- Symbolic eating of pomegranate leaf and drinking three times of **Āb-e-Anār**, each consumption preceded by reciting in a suppressed tone “**In Khuram, in pāki-i-tan, yaozdāthra- è, ravān-rā**” (I drink this for the purification of my body, for the purification of my soul)

- d. Take a **Nāhwā-ni Bāj** (recital of prayer of taking a bath)
- e. Take a Bath
- f. Relinquish the **Nāhwā-ni Bāj**

**NAHĀN IS ADMINISTERED:**

- a. to a child before his or her Navjote or Sudreh-Pushi ceremony;
- b. to bride and groom at their Wedding ceremony;
- c. to a mother at the end of her period of accouchement;
- d. to a Mobed as a part of his Bareshnum ceremony, and
- e. to a Mobedyār on his or her initiation.

**C. BARESHNUM**

**Bareshnum** (from Avestā, *bareshnu* meaning *top or head*) is the highest form of purification which requires a Mobed of certain ritual purity to administer. It is performed in a designated Pāvi of **Bareshnumgāh** in an **Ātashkadeh** and involves segregation of the individual undergoing the purification for nine nights.

Two Mobeds (Zoti/Rāthvi) performing inner liturgical ceremonies are required to undergo this highest level of purification (**Bareshnum**). Two subsequent **Bareshnums** are administered to a candidate for Nāvar; first to administer spiritual purity to the Candidate and the second in the name of the sponsor.

**Process of Administering and Undergoing Bareshnum:**

**1. PREPARATION OF BARESHNUMGĀH**

**Bareshnumgāh** is an enclosed space, covered with sand, gravel, concrete, tiles or stone slabs. If the floor is made of concrete, tiles or stone slabs, all **20 Karsh Pāvis** and all other **Pāvis** should be cut in the floor. The size of the **Bareshnumgāh** is about **35 ft. facing East to West** and about **20 ft. facing North to South**, set up in the **Ātashkadeh** premises with **Pāvis** as shown in the Exhibit. The entire **Bareshnumgāh**, including all the **Pāvis**, shown in the Exhibit should be enclosed for privacy by about 8 ft. (or higher if necessary) wall depending on the surroundings of the **Bareshnumgāh**.

As outlined in the Exhibit, the **Bareshnumgāh** is laid out to accommodate 10 flat Tiles (about 24" wide x 18" long and about 4" in height) **facing West to East** at a distance of about 12" (marked as Tiles 1 to 10 in the Exhibit). Several **Pāvis** (furrows) are cut in the tile floor about 2" deep and 2" wide at certain distances **as shown in the Exhibit attached. An entrance to the Bareshnumgāh is made in the wall at the NE corner.**

**2. Preparation of Zoti (the lead Mobed):**

On the day of Bareshnum, the Mobed to act as the Zoti has to ritually purify himself by taking a Nahān and performing a **Pānch-Tāe Bāj**.

**3. Preparation for Bareshnum:**

After performing Pādyāb-Kusti, and wearing a Padān, the Zoti enters the Bareshnumgāh carrying the following implements:

- a. Consecrated **Āb-e-Anār** (about 10 oz.);
- b. Consecrated water **Ab**;
- c. A pinch of **ash** from the **Afargānyu** in the **Ātashkadeh**;
- d. Consecrated **Āb-Zor** (about 20 oz);
- e. **Pomegranate** leaves (2);
- f. Two **Pāv** Metal Containers of water (**Kahārnās**) (About 1.5 gallons each);
- g. A small **Naōgar** (wooden wand with 9 knots) about 3 feet long with a metal spoon tied at one end by a kusti;
- h. A long **Naōgar**, about 6 to 7 feet long, with a metal nail tied at one end by a kusti;
- i. Two small metal bowls (**Fuliā**);
- j. A fresh set of Clothes and a towel for the Candidate, and
- k. Small container of sand (about 15 spoonful) (to be used on Tile 7).

(If the Bareshnumgāh floor is of concrete or tiles or stone slabs, it is advisable to have a metal container full of sand in the Bareshnumgāh from which sand can be taken in a small metal container as needed for the Bareshnum)

The Zoti positions himself at the **South East** corner of the Bareshnumgāh.

Using the metal nail of the Long Naōgar, the Zoti draws a **Karsh** (in the pre-cut Pāvi **A**) (**app. 1.5' x 6'**) and draws four more **Karshes** in the **4 square 18" X 18" pre-cut Pāvis** (Marked **A(1)**, **A(2)**, **A(3)** and **A(4)** in the Exhibit).

The Zoti places the Naōgars, two small metal bowls (Fulias), Pāv water containers (Kahārnās), Pomegranate leaves, and sand container in **A(2)**, and places **Āb-Zor**, consecrated **Āb-e-Anār**, consecrated **Āb** and Ash in **A(3)**.

After performing Pādyāb-Kusti, the Rāthvi enters the Bareshnumgāh and proceeds to **A(2)**, He pours the **Āb-e-Anār** into a metal bowl (**Fuliu**). He pours **Āb** in a separate metal bowl (**Fuliu**) and adds a pinch of ash in it. He pours a few drops of **Āb** with the ash in the two **Pāv** water containers. The Rāthvi then brings one of the **Pāv** water containers to **Pāvi D** (App. 1.5' x 3') in **North East** corner of the Bareshnumgāh. The Rāthvi returns to **Pāvi A(2)** and carries the metal bowl with **Āb-e-Anār** and pomegranate leaves to **Pāvi B** in the **South West** corner.

After performing Pādyāb-Kusti, the Candidate enters the Bareshnumgāh and proceeds to **Pāvi B** in the **South West** corner. The Candidate holds his **Girehbān** with his left hand and the Rāthvi gives the Candidate two Pomegranate leaves in his right hand and candidate recites

“**Jamwā-ni-Bāj**” as follows:

***Ba nāmeḥ yazadeh, baxāyandeh baxāyazgareh meherbān Hormazd Khodāe ithā āt yazamaideh Ahurem mazdām, yeh gāmchā ashemchā dāt apaschā dāt urvarāoschā vangh-uhīsh raochaschā dāt būmīmchā vīspāchā Vohū. Ashem Vohū (3).***

After completing the **Jamwā-ni-Bāj** the candidate chews the Pomegranate leaves.

The Rāthvi gives the Candidate the **Āb-e-Anār** in the metal container (Fuliu), to sip after reciting in a suppressed tone:

***“In khurram, in pāki-e-tan, yozdāthra-e, ravān-rā”.***

The Candidate repeats this process three times, discards the Fuliu and then relinquishes the Jamwā-ni-Bāj as follows:

(Recite aloud)

***Ashem Vohū (4). Yathā Ahū Vairyō (2), Ashem Vohū (1). Ahmāi Raescha, Hazangarem, Jasa-meh avangh-he mazda, Kerfeh Mozd.***

The candidate then moves to **Pāvi C** and performs his Kusti from **Hormazda Kodāe**.

The Zoti proceeds to **Pāvi D** in **North East** corner, recites “**Khshnothra Ahuraheh Mazdāō Ashem Vohū (1)**”, disrobes and takes a bath using the water in **Pāv** metal container placed in this Pāvi earlier by the Rāthvi. While the Zoti is taking his bath, the Rāthvi sprinkles **Āb** on the Zoti’s clothes. On completion of his bath, the Zoti dries himself, puts on his clothes and ties his Kusti while saying his Kusti prayers.

#### **4. Activating Bareshnumgāh:**

The Zoti proceeds to **Pāvi A(2)** to pick-up the large Naōgar in right hand and small Naōgar in left hand and proceeds to **Tile 1**. Facing **East** and placing the nail of the large Naōgar on the Tile 1, The Zoti recites **Dasturi** as follows:

***“Khshnaōthra Ahuramazda Ashem Vohū (1). Yathā Ahū Vairyō (5).***

(Recite in suppressed tone:)

***Ba Dasturi e Dādār Ahuramazda, Ba Dasturi e Ameshāspandān, Ba Dasturi e Sarosh Asho, Ba Dasturi e Zarathustra Spitamān, Ba Dasturi e Ādarbād Mārespand, Ba Dasturi e Dasturān bāshad”.***

(Recite aloud:)

***Ashem Vohū (3). Fravarāne (Recite appropriate Gāh) frasastayaecha sraoshaheh ashyeheh, takhmaheh tanu-mānthraheh darshi-draōsh āhūryaheh, Khshnaōthra yasnāicha vahmāicha Khshnaōthrāich frasastayaecha, Yathā Ahu Vairyō zaotā frā meh mrūteh athā ratush ashātchit hacha, frā ashava vīdhvāō mraōtu. Ashem.***

(Recite in suppressed tone) **Ashem.**

Then Zoti goes over to the **North West** corner of the Bareshnumgāh marked **E** (Please refer to the Exhibit attached).

Using the nail of the long Naōgar, the Zoti draws 20 Karshes in the corresponding Pāvis while reciting Yathā Ahu Vairyōs as follows:

1. Starting from **point (E)** at the **North West**, draws the **1<sup>st</sup> Karsh** from **point E to point (F)**, (Pāvi marked **E To F**).
2. Starting from **point (F)**, draws the **2<sup>nd</sup> Karsh** towards **South** to **point (G)**, (Pāvi marked **F to G**).
3. Starting from **South East point (G)**, draws the **3<sup>rd</sup> Karsh** towards **West** to **point (H)** (Pāvi marked **G to H**).
4. Starting from **point (H)**, draws the **4<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **North** to **point (E)**. (Pāvi marked **H to E**).
5. Starting from **North West point (I)**, draws **5<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **East** to **point (J)**. (Pāvi marked **I to J**).
6. Starting from **point (J)**, draws the **6<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **South** to **point (K)**. (Pāvi marked **J to K**).
7. Starting from **point (K)**, draws the **7<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **West** to **point (L)**. (Pāvi marked **K to L**).
8. Starting from **point (L)**, draws the **8<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **North** to **point (I)**. (Pāvi marked **L to I**).
9. Starting from **North West point (M)**, draws the **9<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **East** to **point (N)** (Pāvi marked **M to N**).
10. Starting from **point (N)**, draws the **10<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **South** to **point (O)**. (Pāvi marked **N to O**).
11. Starting from **point (O)**, draws the **11<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **West** to **point (P)**. (Pāvi marked **O to P**).
12. Starting from **point (P)** draws the **12<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **North** to **point (M)**. (Pāvi marked **P to M**).
13. Starting from **North West point (Q)**, draws the **13<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **East** to **point (R)**. (Pāvi marked **Q to R**).
14. Starting from **point (R)**, draws the **14<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **South** to **point (S)**. (Pāvi marked **R to S**).
15. Starting from **South East point (S)**, draws the **15<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **West** to **point (T)**. (Pāvi marked **S to T**).
16. Starting from **point (T)**, draws the **16<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **North** to **point (Q)** (Pāvi marked **T to Q**).
17. Starting from **North West point (U)**, draws the **17<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **East** to **point (V)** (Pāvi marked **U to V**).
18. Starting from **point (V)**, draws the **18<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **South** to **point (W)**. (Pāvi marked **V to W**).
19. Starting from **point (W)**, draws the **19<sup>th</sup> Karsh**, towards **West** to **point (X)**. (Pāvi marked **W to X**).
20. Starting from **point (X)**, draws the **20<sup>th</sup> Karsh** towards **North** to **point (U)**. (Pāvi marked **X to U**).

Having completed the drawing of the **20 Karshes**, the Zoti returns to **Tile 1** and recites:

(In suppressed tone):

**Sarosh asho, tagī tan framān, shikafta-zin, zin-awazār, sālāreh dāmāneh Ahuramazda be-rasād. Aedun bād.**

(Reciting aloud):

**Yathā Ahu Vairyo (2). Yasnēmcha vamēmcha aōjascha zavarēcha āfrināmi sraōshaheh ashyeheh takhmaheh tanu mānthraheh darshi draōsh āhūryaheh Ashēm Vōhu (1).**

The Zoti puts down both the Naōgars in **Pāvi A2** and moves to **Pāvi A1**.

### 5. Giving Bareshnum to Candidate:

The Candidate in **Pāvi C**, facing East, recites:

**“Khshnaōthra Ahurahe Mazdāo Ashem Vohū 1,”**

(Recites in suppressed tone):

**Humata, Hukhta, Huvarshta, Humaneshnee, Hugaveshnee, Hukuneshnee** (name of the Candidate or the name of the person in whose name candidate is taking Bareshnum) **tan pāk**” and then he enters the Bareshnumgāh, in **Pāvi** marked **Z**, makes a Karsh using his index finger in **Pāvi Z**, disrobes and ties his clothes in his handkerchief and deposits it in **Pāvi Z**. He then moves to **Tile 1** and sits on it with right hand over his head.

The Zoti moves out of **Pāvi A(1)** with small Naōgar in his right hand and long Naōgar in his left hand from **Pāvi A(2)** and **Āb-Zor** from **Pāvi A(3)** and walks over to the Candidate to the meeting point of **Karshes 5 and 8**, but remains outside the **Pāvi 5, 6, 7, 8**, and places the spoon on Candidate’s right hand and the Candidate places his left hand on top of the spoon touching the spoon only.

Candidate recites Sarosh Bāj as follows:

**‘Ashem Vohū 3. Fravarāne (Recite appropriate Gāh) frasastayaecha sraoshaheh ashyeheh, takhmaheh tanu-mānthraheh darshi-draōsh āhūryaheh, Khshnaōthra yasnāicha vahmāicha Khshnaōthraich frasastayaecha, Yathā Ahu Vairyo zaotā frā meh mrūteh athā ratush ashātchit hacha, frā ashava vīdhvāō mraōtu. Ashem.**

The Candidate removes his hands from his head and the Zoti pours **Āb-Zor** on the spoon and from the spoon pours it thrice on the Candidate’s palm. The candidate uses the first pour to apply it to his hands and uses the second and the third pour to apply on his entire body, starting from his head.

The Zoti then recites **“Kem Nā Mazdā ..... Astavaitish Ashaheh”**

and then places the nail of the long Naōgar on **Tile 2**,

and recites with the Candidate **“Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā”**

as the Candidate advances from **Tile 1 to Tile 2** and sits on **Tile 2**.

The Zoti pours **Āb-Zor** in the spoon and from the spoon pours it thrice on the Candidate's palm. The candidate uses the first pour to apply it to his hands and uses the second and the third pours to apply on his entire body, starting from his head.

The Zoti then recites "***Kem Nā Mazdā ..... Astavaitish Ashaheh***"

and then places the nail of the long Naōgar on **Tile 3**,

and recites with the Candidate "***Nemachā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā***"

as the Candidate advances from **Tile 2 to Tile 3** and sits on **Tile 3**.

The above process is repeated while the Candidate advances from Tile 3 to 4, 4 to 5, 5 to 6 and 6 to 7, with the Zoti reciting "***Kem Nā Mazdā ..... Astavaitish Ashaheh***"

and then placing the nail of the long Naōgar on the next **Tile**,

and the Zoti with the Candidate reciting "***Nemachā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā***"

as the Candidate advances from one tile to the next and sits on it, and the Zoti pouring **Āb-Zor** thrice and the Candidate applying it on his entire body.

While the Candidate is on Tile 7, the Zoti gives 15 applications of sand which the Candidate applies on his entire body.

The Zoti at this stage recites:

***"Ahunem vairem tanum pāiti, Yathā Ahu Vairyō (1) and Kem nā Mazdā ..... "Astavaitish Ashaheh"***

and then places the nail of the Naōgar on **Tile 8**,

and recites with the Candidate "***Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā***"

as the Candidate advances from **Tile 7 to Tile 8** and sits on **Tile 8**.

While the Candidate is on Tile 8, the Zoti pours 3 applications of **Āb** on the Candidate's palm, which the Candidate applies on his entire body.

The Zoti at this stage recites:

***"Ahunem vairem tanum pāiti, Yathā Ahu Vairyō (1) and Kem nā Mazdā ..... "Astavaitish Ashaheh"***

and then places the nail of the Naōgar on **Tile 9**,

and recites with the Candidate "***Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā***"

as Candidate advances from **Tile 8 to Tile 9** and sits on **Tile 9**.

While the Candidate is on **Tile 9**, Zoti pours 3 applications of **Āb** on the Candidate's palm, which the Candidate applies on his entire body.

The Zoti at this stage recites:

***"Ahunem vairem tanum pāiti, Yathā Ahu Vairyō (1) and Kem nā Mazdā ..... "Astavaitish Ashaheh"***

and then places the nail of the Naōgar once again on **Tile 9**.

and recites with the Candidate "***Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā***"



The Candidate remains on **Tile 9**.

On **Tile 9** again, the Zoti pours 3 applications of **Āb**, which the Candidate applies on his entire body.

The Zoti at this stage recites:

***“Ahunem vairem tanum pāiti, Yathā Ahu Vairyō (1) and Kem nā Mazdā ..... Astavaitish Ashaheh”***

and then places the nail of the Naôgar on **Tile 10**.

and recites with the Candidate ***“Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā”***

as the Candidate advances from **Tile 9 to Tile 10** and sits on **Tile 10**.

While the Candidate is on **Tile 10**, the Zoti pours 3 applications of **Āb** on the Candidate’s palm, which the Candidate applies on his entire body.

The Zoti at this stage recites:

***“Ahunem vairem tanum pāiti, Yathā Ahu Vairyō (1) and Kem nā Mazdā ..... Astavaitish Ashaheh”***

and then once again places the nail of the Naôgar on **Tile 10**.

and recites with the Candidate ***“Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā”***

as the Candidate remains on **Tile 10**.

While the Candidate is on **Tile 10**, the Zoti pours 3 applications of **Āb** a second time on the Candidate’s palm, which the Candidate applies on his entire body.

The Zoti at this stage recites:

***“Ahunem vairem tanum pāiti, Yathā Ahu Vairyō (1) and Kem nā Mazdā ..... Astavaitish Ashaheh”***

and then places the nail of the Naôgar once again on **Tile 10**.

and recites with the Candidate ***“Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā”***

as the Candidate stays on **Tile 10**.

The Zoti once again pours 3 applications of **Āb** third time on the Candidate’s palm, which the Candidate applies on his entire body.

The Zoti at this stage recites:

***“Ahunem vairem tanum pāiti, Yathā Ahu Vairyō (1) and Kem nā Mazdā ..... Astavaitish Ashaheh”***

and then places the nail of the Naôgar on **Tile 10**.

and recites with the Candidate ***“Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā”***

as the Candidate stays on **Tile 10**.

The Zoti then goes to **Pāvi A(2)**, takes the second **Pāv** water container and then going to the candidate pours the water from the container in three streams, giving sufficient time between the streams for the Candidate to remove all the sand from his body, taking a bath.

The Zoti takes **Āv from the small metal bowl** (fuliu) and sprinkles it over the Candidate's fresh set of clothes and towel. The Candidate uses the towel to dry himself, puts on a fresh set of clothes and puts his Kusti loosely over his shoulder.

The Zoti and the Candidate jointly relinquish Sarosh Bāj:

**“Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā (3 times) Yathā (2). Yasnēmcha vamēmcha aōjascha zavarēcha āfrināmi sraōshaheh ashyekeh takhmaheh tanu mānthraheh darshi draōsh āhūiryahē Ashēm Vohū (1). Ahmāi Raescha...Kerfeh Mozd.”**

Then the Candidate repeats after the Zoti *the following*:

**“Zadeh nashash sar-o-tan pāk ashahi Ravān, Herbad Pāk (3 times)”**.

(Meaning 'Pollution is exterminated from the body, soul is purified, Mobed is now pure')

The Candidate ties his Kusti from **Ahura Mazda Khodāe** and completes the Kusti prayer.

Following this Bareshnum process, the Candidate proceeds to Nahān Khānā, and then recites Patet Pashemāni, and there he remains in seclusion for nine nights during which the Candidate is to:

- Not come in direct contact (touch) with wooden items and any other person;
- While drinking, not to come in direct contact with any liquid;
- Recite Farajyāt prayers in each Gāh;
- Regular meals (served in metal containers) are to be consumed while wearing different set of clothes and gloves while observing **Jamwā-ni-Bāj**;
- Sleep on a leather mattress wearing different set of clothes and a cap held in place by a chin strap;
- Sit on a square leather piece app 3' x 3', and
- Before answering calls of nature, a different set of clothes, gloves and socks are to be worn, then recite the **Bāj** for answering the call of nature and observe the dry system of toilet paper but not use water;
- Spend time in meditation, spiritual reading and reciting required prayers, and
- Have religious and spiritual discussions with senior Mobeds and elders.

## 6. The Navshos baths

On the fourth day, after the great Bareshnum purification, the candidate is to go through a bath which is known as the first **Navsho**, *i.e.*, the first bath (or, wash 'shu') out of the nine nights of the Isolation or Retreat.

In a regular bathroom containing all tiles and with a raised seat in the center for the Candidate to sit, within the Atashkadeh environment, the candidate is given the bath on the fourth, seventh and tenth days.

For the first **Navsho**, a Mobed with the **Bareshnum** who has performed a **Pānch-Tāe Bāj**, makes **pāv**, a water-pot (**Kahārnu**) and a small **metallic cup**. The water-pot is then filled with ordinary pure water. A few drops of the consecrated water (**Āb**) are put into it. The Mobed dries the metallic cup and pours a little of the consecrated **Āb-Zor** in it.

The candidate then goes into the bathroom and prays: “**Khshnaothra Ahuraheh Mazdao Ashem Vohu (1)**”. He then undresses himself, ties his clothes in his handkerchief and puts them away. He then sits on the raised seat facing East. Then, the Mobed brings the metallic cup containing **Āb-Zor** and places it on the floor before the Candidate.

The Candidate then places his both hands over his head and takes the **Baj of Sarosh**, as follows:

**“Ashem Vohu (3). Fravarāne (Recite appropriate Gāh) frasastayaecha, sraoshaheh ashyekeh takhmaheh tanu-mānthraheh darshi-draōsh āhūryaheh, Khshnaōthra yasnāicha vahmāicha Khshnaōthraich frasastayaecha, Yathā Ahu Vairyō zaotā frā me mrūteh athā ratush ashātchit hacha, frā ashava vīdhvāō mraōtu. Ahunem vairem tanum pāiti (3), Yathā Ahu Vairyō (1), Kem nā Mazdā ..... Ashaheh”**

The Candidate then takes the metallic cup before him and applies the **Āb-Zor** over his whole body and discards the cup.

The Mobed then brings the **Pāv Kahārnu** of water and places it before him. He pours a few drops of the water out of the pot upon the newly washed set of clothes which the candidate is to put on after his bath, thus consecrating his clothes.

The Candidate then bathes himself using the water from the **Pāv** water-pot. The Candidate then dries himself, puts on his clothes, and placing his Kusti over his shoulders, he finishes the **Sarosh Baj** as follows:

**“Nemaschā Yā Ārmaitish Izāchā (3 times) Yathā (2). Yasnēmcha vamēmcha aōjascha zavarēcha āfrināmi sraōshaheh ashyekeh takhmaheh tanu mānthraheh darshi draōsh āhūryahe Ashēm Vohū (1). Ahmāi Raescha...Kerfeh Mozd.”**

The Candidate then ties his Kusti from **Ahura Mazda Khodāe** and completes the Kusti prayer.

This finishes the first **Navsho** bath.

After the **Navsho** bath, the Candidate again returns to Nahān Khānā, and performs complete Kusti prayer and recites Patet Pashemāni.

The Candidate then observes the regulations in the same way as during the first three days.

The Candidate has a second **Navsho** bath on the seventh day. The process is all the same, but with a difference that at this second **Navsho** he is given a **Kahārnu** and a small water pot (**Kalasyo**) filled with water for his bath.

Then again, three more days of regulations are observed.

The Candidate has a third **Navsho** bath on the tenth day. The process is all the same, but with a difference, that at this third **Navsho** he is given a **Kahārnu** and two **Kalasyās** for his bath.

This is the end of **Navshos** baths.

After this final bath, the Candidate is free to go to Atashkadeh for further Pāv Mahel ceremonies or go home.

**This is the end of Bareshnum Ceremony.**

## **Glossary:**

**Āb:** Consecrated water.

**Āb-e-Anār:** Consecrated Pomegranate Juice

(In the absence of traditional Nirang (consecrated albino bull's urine) and consecrated water **Āb** in North America, the process presented below is developed by NAMC to consecrate pomegranate juice and consecrated water **Āb** as their substitutes.)

**Āb-e-Anār** (a consecrated liquid) and **Āb** are used during Zoroastrian purification ritual.

**Āb-e-Zor:**

Traditionally, Taro (also known as Gomez – Cow's urine) is used for cleansing outer body during Bareshnum ceremony. Since Taro is not readily available and accepted in North America, **Āb-e-Zor** is suggested as an alternative. For further clarification, please refer to Ervad Cawas Desai's article attached to this document.

**Ab-e-Zor** is used for cleansing the outer body and consists of either

- a. Diluted lemon juice or
- b. Boiled pomegranate leaves and twigs

**Chāshni:** Tasting of Darun by the Mobed by breaking a small part of it and eating it without touching his hand or fingers to the mouth.

**Darun:** Round *flat bread prepared from wheat flour and Ghee.*

**Farajyāt:** (requisite) prayers: Farajyāt prayers in first three Gehs consists of:

- Pādyāb- Kusti
- 101 Names
- Sarosh Bāj
- Appropriate Geh
- Khorshed Niyāesh

- Meher Niyāesh
- Doā Nām Setāyashne

During the Aiwisruthrem Geh, it consists of:

- Pādyāb- Kusti
- 101 Names
- Sarosh Bāj
- Aiwisruthrem Geh
- Sarosh Yasht Vadi
- Doā Nām Setāyashne

During the Ushahin Geh, it consists of:

- Pādyāb- Kusti
- 101 Names
- Sarosh Bāj
- Ushahin Geh
- Sarosh Yasht Hādokht
- Doā Nām Setāyashne

**Fuliu(ā):** small metal bowl(s)

**Kahārnu(ā):** metal pot(s) for water

**Naōgar:** Naōgar (graom navapikhem in Vendidad), commonly referred to as Naō-gireh, is a nine-knotted stick. In numerology, number 9 is the number of Universal love and perfection and when multiplied by any number the addition of the digits of the product results in nine. Some portraits of Zarathustra depict him with a similar stick, signifying his authority to fight against evil. Zoti uses it as a symbol of his authority to perform this purification ceremony. Short Naōgar is about 3' in length and long Naōgar is about 6' in length.

**Nirang:** Nirang (consecrated albino bull's urine) is traditionally used during Zoroastrian purification ritual.

Nirang (used in India) is prepared by an elaborated ceremony of Nirangdin over the collected urine of an albino bull along with urine of other bulls. Since this is not possible in North America, the process of **consecrating The Pomegranate Juice** as a replacement of Nirang, **Āb-e-Anār**, is developed by NAMC. Refer to **Processes** section for the procedure to consecrate **Āb-e-Anār**.

**PROCESSES:**

## 1. THE PROCESS OF CONSECRATING THE POMEGRANATE JUICE (ĀB-E-ANĀR) AND ĀB IN NORTH AMERICA IS AS FOLLOWS:

After performing Pādyāb-Kusti and Farajyāt prayers, two Mobeds perform **Pānch-Tāe Bāj** in Yasnagāh of an Ātashkadeh. Then the Mobeds clean a bottle thrice with water, dry it thoroughly and tie a fine piece of white muslin cloth on the mouth of the bottle. While reciting Yathā Ahu Vairyo and using white muslin on the top of the bottle as a filter, the Mobeds soften pomegranates, remove the crown, extract its juice and pour it in the bottle. The Mobeds perform a similar process of cleaning and drying another bottle for **Pāv** water and pour pure water in it. The Mobeds then perform a Baj with the Khshnuman of Sarosh Yazad on the juice and water in Yasnāgāh in Ātashkadeh, and then close the bottles with airtight lids. They refrigerate or freeze the resulting **ĀB-E-ANĀR and Āb** and use them as needed and consume within a reasonable time.

(This process is adapted from Kāmchalāv Nirangdīn Banāv-vāni terkib explained in Zarhosti Dharma aneh Kriyā Visheh Lakhāno – 1994 -by Dastūrji Firoze Kotwal, Page 44)

This consecrated Ab-E-Anar may be used for all purification ceremonies and be made available to Zarhostis for their Nahan, Bareshnum or other such requirements

## 2. Khub:

Small Khub is a celebration required to perform Bāj and Yasnā ceremonies and consists of **Pānch- Tāe Bāj**. After performing the **Pānch-Tāe Bāj**, to recite the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bāj it needs to follow the procedure of purifying Kalasio and tying the Barsam. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bāj with the same Barsam a maximum of up to three Bājs can be recited. For the 4<sup>th</sup> Bāj the procedure to purify the Kalasio and tying the Barsam must be performed again. The power of small Khub lasts up to five Gāhs. A Mobed with Grand or Motti Khub also known as Khub of Mino Nāvar can perform up to 9 Bājs.

## 3. Pānch-Tāe Bāj:

A Bāj is a liturgical ceremony performed for offerings to various yazatas or fravashis. In **Pānch-Tāe Bāj**, five **Tāes** or metal wires, four Darūns, Ghee (purified butter), water, some dates or dry resins and pomegranate seeds are used. It is recited by Mobeds for performance of small Khub (required celebration to perform Bāj and Yasnā ceremonies). It consists of recitation of Pāzand Dibāchō of **Humata, Hukhta, Huvarshta** with the mention of the names of persons (living or deceased) in whose honor it is performed. The performing Mobed does chāshni of the Darūn five times: (1) small piece of 1<sup>st</sup> Darūn (2) small piece of 2<sup>nd</sup> Darūn with Ghee (3) small piece of 3<sup>rd</sup> Darūn with Ghee and dipped in water (4) small piece of 4<sup>th</sup> Darūn with Ghee and dipped in water (5) The last chāshni is done with some dates and pomegranate seeds, with Ghee and dipped in water.

\* \* \* \* \*

**CONSECRATION OF GAOMEZ, BARESHNUM AND THE CONSECRATION OF AN ADARAN FIRE**

The purpose of this Paper is to explain the North American Mobed Council's position on the subject of the requirements to consecrate an Adaran Fire in North America.

It should be mentioned up front and in no uncertain terms, that when, not if, steps are taken to consecrate a fire in North America, NAMC will come under severe criticism from some of our fellow co-religionists, both in India and here in North America. When all the criticisms are boiled down to their essentials, they will devolve over one point, "alat" and its consecration, and all ceremonies using non-consecrated alat being vitiated, and therefore, null and void.

There is a common belief that consecrated fires existed in pre-historic times going as far back as the Indo-Iranian period. The Bundahishn, the Zand Commentaries and the "Khshnuman" of the Atash Nyash mention the three legendary fires of ancient Iran: Adar Khordad (originally called Adar Farnbag), Adar Gushnasp and Adar Burzin-Mehr, the most sacred of the three, said to have been brought to earth by Zarathushtra himself. The Rig Veda mentions three ancient fires: the Agni of Bharata, the Agni of Devata and the Agni of Daivodasa.

However, there is no historical record of consecrated fires or even fire temples prior to the mid Achaemenian period. Consecrated fires as we know them did not exist until the Parthian era (250 BC to 226 AD). The oldest remains of what has been identified as a fire-temple are those on Mount Khajeh, near Lake Hamun in Sistan. Only traces of the foundation and ground-plan survive and have been tentatively dated to the 3rd or 4th century BC. The temple was rebuilt during the Parthian era and enlarged during Sassanid times<sup>i</sup>. According to Mary Boyce<sup>ii</sup>, "That the rituals of fire was a doctrinal modification and absent from early Zoroastrianism is also evident in the later Atash Nyash. In the oldest passages of that liturgy, it is the hearth fire that speaks to "all those for whom it cooks the evening and morning meal", which Boyce observes is not consistent with sanctified fire. The temple is an even later development: from Herodotus<sup>iii</sup> it is known that in the mid-5th century BC the Zoroastrians worshipped to the open sky, ascending mounds to light their fires. Strabo confirms this, noting that in the 6th century, the sanctuary at Zela in Cappadocia was an artificial mound, walled in, but open to the sky<sup>iv</sup>.

This paper, therefore, seeks to lay out the historical evidence of the practices followed in Iran during the Sassanian Dynasty and our subsequent migration to India. It must be borne in mind that there are little or no records of what and how Zoroastrian religious rituals were performed prior to the Sassanian Era, when the extant religious fragments were gathered and codified in the third century<sup>v</sup>. Referring to Shaul Shaked<sup>vi</sup>, Mary Boyce states "the teachings of Zoroaster contributed little to the Zoroastrianism which was the state religion of Sassanian Persia. This, Shaked sees



rather as representing a religious tradition which had 'slowly found its own style and way of life' during the many centuries which had elapsed since the time of its nominal founder. Even by the Sassanian period, Shaked discerns little evidence that it had acquired a fixed and generally accepted body of beliefs, and so is led to conclude that it was only during early Islamic times, when kings with their power had vanished and a small group of Persian priests 'had the stage entirely to themselves', that the latter were able to impose their own 'code of a monolithic Zoroastrianism' on what was left of the community. Only then was a 'strict definition of the limits of orthodoxy' achieved, such as emerges from the ninth-century Pahlavi books"<sup>vii</sup>.

As late as 881 AD when Zadspram, the high priest of Sirkan, contemplated a change in purification rituals, he was chastised by his brother Manuschihr, the high priest of Kerman, and instructed to abide by the traditional rituals"<sup>viii</sup>. According to Encyclopaedia Iranica, "Since purity was of fundamental importance, it was natural that priests, who were professionally concerned, should have continued to ponder on the purity laws and to extend the traditional cleansing rites. This activity was probably intensified at certain epochs, such as that of Macedonian domination, the later Sassanian period with the stimulus of the written Vidēvdād with its zand, and the centuries of Muslim and Hindu rule, when the two small Persian and Parsi communities were largely shut in on themselves among others who kept different purity laws. The results of this process of evolution appear twofold: one, the basic "Avestan" rituals were elaborated on, and, two, their use was extended far beyond what, to judge from the Vidēvdād, were their original purpose and scope. One far-reaching development concerned imbibing gōmēz with wood ash. As we have seen, in the Vidēvdād this is prescribed only to cleanse from serious inward physical contaminations. Otherwise, gōmēz is to be used only externally, and ash not at all in the cleansing of persons. Nothing is to be swallowed at the barašnom as described in the three Vidēvdād accounts. As the main ancient purification rite, the barašnom seems, however, to have been developed by priests in "post-Avestan" times as an all-purpose ritual, used not only to cleanse from specific direct contamination but also to confer or maintain purity generally, both inward and outward. Gōmēz that was to be imbibed was now invested, moreover, with special potency by being consecrated (made yaštag), doubtless to give it greater efficacy against the dēvs of pollution; and some consecrated gōmēz, with consecrated water, was also used in the barašnom rite. What appears to have been a greatly increased concern for ritual cleansing from Sassanian times onward expressed itself also by a much-extended use of gōmēz applied externally. It was presumably to promote this that the story was told of how Jamšēd was cured of a leprous-like infection of the hand when a cow staled over it as he slept (Persian Rivayats, ed. Unvala, I, pp. 311.19-315.3, tr. Dhabhar, pp. 295-96)"<sup>ix</sup>.

Let us, therefore, first consider the use of "gaomez" and its consecration to create "nirang" since our tradition bound orthodox co-religionists will contend that without its use and in the absence of priests who are in a state of ritual purity, the bareshnum cannot be taken and therefore, no inner liturgical ceremony can be performed. In addressing

these questions, the further one delves into this subject, one is ultimately faced with the “chicken and egg” conundrum.

The use of urine as a cleansing agent and a preservative to ward off evil spirits has been known since time immemorial. Before soaps or chemical cleansers and disinfectants were discovered or invented, human and animal urine was used by almost all cultures. In fact, the ancient Romans used urine to wash their clothes and clean their teeth! Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, quoting Dr. Eugen Wilhelm citing references from Roman and Hindu books, states “The practice of using cow's urine as a preservative against the influences of evil spirits is very old indeed, and likely to date from the most ancient times. Urine was also employed in medicine from the most ancient times. It was so used in Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Scandinavia. Pliny the Elder refers to its use as medicine in the 18th chapter of the 28th book of his Natural History, as does Galenus, “the most prominent physician of antiquity” next to Hippocrates”<sup>x</sup>.

In a paper presented to the Anthropological Society of Bombay, Ruttanshaw Kershaspi Dadachanji said, “Indeed, the principle of the institution of prayers implies first the propitiation of the Good Spirit or Spirits and secondly the condemnation and scaring away directly as well as indirectly of the Evil Spirit or spirits. Thus, the spirit scaring idea must have a place in all systems of religious beliefs..... The next spirit scaring practice to be considered is known as the Nirang or Abezar ceremony. After leaving the bed in the morning the orthodox Zoroastrian has before taking any ablutions at all to perform the kushti ceremony near the bed. He has then to pour into the palm of his left hand some drops of the cow's urine which is called Abezar or the golden water or liquid.....It is certain that the kushti ceremony dates from a remote antiquity, though the Abezar ceremony seems from the very language of the prayer relating to it to be a much later growth, most likely instituted long after the Parsis settled in India and came into contact with their Indo-Aryan brethren”<sup>xi</sup>.

Mr. Dadachanji goes on to say, “But the use of the cow's urine by the Parsi community raises the question as to when it was introduced amongst them, whether they adopted it after their settlement in India or whether their ancestors in Persia were familiar with it. This question requires to be fully gone into on another occasion. But it may be noted in passing that none of the extant Avestic compositions except the Vendidad allude to the use of this fluid. And the Vendidad itself nowhere refers to the use of the cow's urine which was so widely prevalent as already stated amongst the Parsis till about a quarter of a century back. At four places the Vendidad enjoins the use of the bullock's urine and at two other places of the urine of a bull. It is not impossible that these allusions may be interpolations made in after times in India by the priesthood to provide sanction for the use of the cow's urine adopted by the Parsis in India in imitation of their Hindu brethren. Or it is possible that the use of the bullock's or the bull's urine was suggested by the religious practices of the ancient Egyptians after their conquest by the Iranians. Having regard to the language of the Abezar prayer already set out particularly by the employment of the expression Shaitan or Satan therein the first theory appears to be the more probable of the two”.

If one examines the use of urine in India, one finds that ancient Indian mythology, as often cited in the Rig Veda, is rife with the use of urine and the benefits of “panchgavya” the five products of the cow, namely milk, butter, curds, dung and urine.

According to Rajani K. Dixit, a Vedic Sanskrit scholar and lecturer, “There is a curious line in the Rigveda (RV. 10. 87 (16)): “The non-Aryans consecrate with horses’ and bovine paurusheya... through kravis.” In order to divine the real meaning of the verse, we need to understand two words here, viz. kravis and paurusheya. ‘Kravis’ is a Vedic word, not found in later Sanskrit, but it can be directly connected with the English ‘crevice’, meaning a crack or a break. It seems the author is talking about the constant abhishek (worship by sprinkling of water) on a Shiva Linga from the jalaadhaari (a pot with a hole in the bottom) overhead. It is a common sight in the Hindu Shiva temples. The water then flows out through a small open duct attached to the Linga, thus the Linga and the duct combined represent the male sexual organ. As to the second word, paurusheya derived from purusha, or male, the usage is similar to that of the word veerya, meaning semen, from the word veera. In place of the water now used in Hindu temples, it seems the non-Aryans used real urine and semen of horses and cows. In RV.7.86 (7), Vasishtha calls Mahadeva a urinating god, or midhusha (midh meaning ‘pass urine’). When cows began to be considered holy, it was this non-Aryan practice that led Hindus to take cow urine as prasaad”<sup>xii</sup>.

It is a well-known fact that “gomutra” (cow urine) is used extensively in India for medicinal and spiritual purposes. In a paper entitled “The spiritual properties of gomutra and spiritual healing benefits” it is mentioned that “Gomutra, though it is inanimate, has the ability to attract Divine consciousness (Chaitanya) which in turn creates an increase in the Sattva component and therefore facilitates spiritual healing. One may question why an Indian cow’s urine has such special healing abilities. Just as water has the innate property to cleanse and fire to burn, the Indian cow is the only animal which has the ability to attract the frequencies of all the Deities in the universe. As a result, any discharges or by-products such as milk, gomutra (cow’s urine) and cow dung inherit these frequencies and are considered sāttvik. The Indian cow’s urine has the ability to attract up to 5% of the frequencies of all the Deities in the universe”<sup>xiii</sup>.

In the consecration of Buddhist temples, the Vajravali Texts composed by the Indian tantric master Abhayakaragupta, mention that the ba-hyung Inga, the five products milk, butter, curd, dung, and urine of the cow are to be used. The cow should be young, red and pure and the products should not be allowed to fall on the ground<sup>xiv</sup>.

Both Iranian and Indian history record that there was continuous contact and considerable interchange between India and Iran, especially during the Sassanian dynasty. Two Sassanian kings were married to Indian princesses – Hormazd II (301 to 310 AD) was married to Ifrah a Kushan princess and Behram V Gor (420 to 438 AD) was married to Sapinood, a princess of Kanauj<sup>xv</sup>. In fact, Behram Gor’s younger son Raja Damanik Sumatera, the younger brother of Yazdegerd II, founded the Gardhabin Dynasty in Rajasthan<sup>xvi</sup>. It is highly likely, therefore, that Indian religious practices had some influence on Sassanian Zoroastrianism, when the “lost” Zoroastrian Scriptures were redacted and codified.

Although there is a reference for the use of gaomez in the Vishtasp Yasht<sup>xvii</sup>, it is the Vendidad which gives the injunctions for its use. There is only one reference in the Vendidad where gaomez is to be imbibed<sup>xviii</sup>, which is in connection with the cleansing “of the grave within the womb” of a woman who has given birth to a still born child. Also, there is only one reference in the Vendidad that the gaomez should be from an “uncastrated bull, such as the law requires”<sup>xix</sup>. The words “such as the law requires” have been interpreted differently by different scholars – one school of thought contending that it refers to a pure white bull<sup>xx</sup>, whereas another school maintaining that it refers to the rituals of consecration of the bull’s urine<sup>xxi</sup>.

It is evident, therefore, that the practice of imbibing nirang during the “nahan” ceremonies is a practice which probably started in India and carried back to Iran through the Rivayats.

The fact that the Vendidad Fargard XIX-21 refers to an uncastrated bull clearly implies that the practice of bull castration was in existence at the time. In a book written for students and practitioners of animal castration<sup>xxii</sup>, the author contends that castration of cattle started in India in the seventh century BC.

Referring to the treatment of cattle in Zoroastrianism, Richard Folz contends, “Perhaps not surprisingly for an ancient pastoral culture, by far the most prominent and highly revered animal in the Gathas is the cow, who is seen as a primary nourisher of humankind: “We address You (as) the waters, and (as) the fertile (cows), and (as) the mother (cow)s, who are not to be killed because they nurse the poor (and) provide drink for all beings, best and most beautiful”. (Yasna 38.5; Humbach translation). Indeed, cows are seen as being worthy of worship, and along with other animal species, they are said to possess souls: “Herewith we now worship the soul (uruuān) of the cow and her fashioner. And (we worship) our own souls and those of the domestic animals (pasu-kanam) which seek refuge with us, (both with us) to whom they (may belong), and (with us) who may belong to them. And we worship the souls of (those) wild animals (daiti-kanam) that (are) harmless” (Yasna 39.1-2). Cattle are described repeatedly as a source of human joy (44.6, 47.3, 50.2). Treatment of cattle is a basic measure of human morality: bad people don’t herd cattle properly (49.1) or don’t breed them at all (49.4). Pasturing cattle is presented as an aspect of Truth (understood as cosmic order, aša):” Let the best insight, which purifies birth also for mankind, be applied to the cow. Thou breedest her for food for us. For the (cow) provides us good dwelling, she (provides us) stability (and) might(iness)” (48.5-6)”<sup>xxiii</sup>.

It seems highly unlikely, therefore, that cattle castration was practiced in Zoroastrian Iran, and if so, then the use of the urine of an uncastrated bovine is of Indian, and not Iranian, origin. It also seems entirely probable that the ritual of consecrating bulls’ urine to create nirang was an Indian practice imported into Iran during the Sassanian Era.

Although the “nirangdin” ceremony was performed in Iran, (the last one was performed in Yazd in 1961), there appear to be some differences in its practice from that in India. As practiced in Iran, Mary Boyce says, “the urine should be taken from bull-calves, preferably white in colour, though in practice golden-brown ones had

generally to be used. The chosen calves, or young bulls, were brought into two stalls in the old 'Gahambar Khana' in Yazd, and were kept there for seven days, during which time they were given pure water to drink, and were fed on ritually clean food, offered them with recital of Avestan. The urine, taken on the seventh day, must not be taken during *Rapatven Gah* (that is, the noontide watch), but only during the morning and afternoon ones. A vessel was meticulously washed and dried for the purpose, and thereafter the liquid was strained through muslin into glass vessels. The initial service of consecration was carried out by seven priests, and thereafter a *Vendidad* should be solemnized over the *nirang* on the next six nights, to make a sevenfold consecration. Then the *nirang*, placed in stoppered glass jars, was set under the earth for forty days (either in a cellar or in a hole in the ground), before being taken into use. All agreed that the longer it could be kept the better, and an ideal time was thought to be seven years, five beneath the ground and two above.....As it aged, the liquid became odourless and colourless”<sup>xxiv</sup>.

Referring to the “*Rivayats*” in comparing the “*nirangdin*” as performed in India, Mary Boyce goes on to say “Nothing is said there about the need for seven priests, or seven performances of the *Vendidad* and these would appear therefore to be subsequent elaborations. Of the animals to be used it is merely stated that bulls are best, and failing them oxen. In India the Parsis evolved the custom of consecrating a white bull and keeping him both to provide hairs for the *varas* or metal ring used in all major acts of worship (hence his name, the *varasya*), and urine for *nirang*; but they too used ordinary bulls as well to provide enough urine for the service of consecration, contenting themselves with bringing these into a sacred precinct a day beforehand....The use of *nirang* was abandoned early in the present century by reformist Parsis, who substituted wine instead; and most Irani Zoroastrians have likewise adopted wine or fruit juice now for this purpose”<sup>xxv</sup>.

Let us now consider the *bareshnum*.

Historically, the *bareshnum* was used as a form of purification and segregation. According to Sir J. J. Modi<sup>xxvi</sup>, the original purpose of the *bareshnum*, as indicated in the *Vendidad*, was to purify those who came into contact with a worse form of impurity, such as a dead body. Since some deaths occurred due to infectious diseases, it was advisable to keep the person who came into such contact in segregation for a period of nine nights, which was considered to be the period of incubation of any disease. The concept of purity was later expanded, in the Sassanian Dynasty, to include those priests who were called upon to perform the purification ceremony for others, hence the term “*Yaozdathregar*” meaning purifier.

Fargard IX of the *Vendidad* deals with the *bareshnum* and details how the *bareshnum* is to be given. The layout of the *bareshnumgah* and the method of giving the *bareshnum* changed after coming to India. The *Vendidad* calls for pits of specific sizes to be dug in a certain sequence. Today in India, the pits have been replaced by series of stones. A dog is brought into the *bareshnumgah* and at certain points the candidate

has to touch the left ear of the dog with his left hand. Nowhere in the Vendidad is there any mention of a dog being used in the bareshnum.

Today in India, it is accepted that the bareshnum is vitiated if the person taking the bareshnum comes into contact with water, except during ritual cleansing, or when the “varasya” whose nirang has been used in the bareshnum passes away during the period of the bareshnum. The bareshnum holder’s ritual purity is also vitiated if the holder comes into contact with a non-Zoroastrian, or a long journey is undertaken, especially over water.

If one goes back in history to take a look at what was done when our ancestors came to India and established the Iranshah fire, the first fire on Indian soil, one finds that the only extant account of this is contained in the “Quisseh Sanjan”. In the words of Rustom Paymaster, “Following upon this noteworthy event, for a period of seven centuries, the History of the Parsees remains a complete and pathetic blank”<sup>xxvii</sup>. The Quisseh Sanjan was written in about 1599 AD, some 700 years after the advent to India, and is based solely on oral tradition as recollected by the author, Bahman Kaikobad Sanjana. However, in a paper presented at The Twelfth All India Oriental Conference in 1943<sup>xxviii</sup>, Mr. B.N. Bhathena pointed out some glaring discrepancies in that account.

Traditionally, the Iranshah fire was consecrated by Nairyosangh Dhaval assisted by Shapur Sheriar and Hormazdiar Ramiar, all of whom came to India by sea. If a sea crossing vitiates the bareshnum, then the consecrating priests must have had their bareshnum performed in India. The question then arises as to how a bareshnum can be administered in the absence of a yaozdathregar priest and how was the “nirangdin” ceremony performed to obtain the nirang for taking the bareshnum?

If indeed, some priests walked all the way from Khorasan to India as some allege, which alat did they bring with them and is it possible that their bareshnum and the alat they brought were not vitiated? The kshnoomists maintain that the priests who came by sea were of such a high caliber that they prayed night and day sitting in the prow of the vessel maintaining their connection to the seabed and therefore, did not lose their ritual purity.

The only reference about priests coming by foot from Khorasan is in the Quisseh Sanjan, which mentions that after the initial settlement in Sanjan, priests came from Khorasan and other migrants with skills to make the various instruments for consecration. According to legend, the only alat brought from Khorasan was the ash (bhasam) from one of the three great legendary fires which it is said serves as the bed for the fire today at Udwada<sup>xxix</sup>.

In 1940 when the Fasli Atashkadeh was established in Bombay, the Zarthoshti Radi Society had published a list of questions regarding the consecration of the Atashkadeh and the responses by leading authorities on the religion<sup>xxx</sup>. In that booklet, Behramgore Anklesaria opines that either priests in ritual purity came by foot overland from Khorasan to India and administered the bareshnum or that Nairyosangh, Shapur and Hormazdiar self-administered the bareshnum to each other<sup>xxxi</sup>.

Be that as it may, this raises the question about how was the first varasya consecrated without using the nirang for the bareshnum to perform first the Yazashne, then the Vendidad and finally the Nirangdin.

The central theme of the Yazashne ceremony is the preparation and consumption of the liquid extracted from the “haoma” plant. Among the Hindus, and in the Rig Veda, the same libation is referred to as “soma”. Both are derived from a more ancient Proto-Indo-Aryan ceremony. There is a difference, however, as to what plant is used to extract the liquid. In the Yazashne ceremony, twigs of the “haoma” plant, ephedra, a health beneficial plant are used, whereas in the Soma ceremony, an intoxicating extract is used.

Mike Crowley, a Welshman who became a Buddhist Lama, indicates that “The Rig Veda mentions urine in connection with “soma”<sup>xxxii</sup>. In this article, Crowley quotes Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, “Acting in concert, those charged with the office, richly gifted, do full homage to Soma. The swollen men piss the flowing (soma)”. Relying on the authority of R. Gordon Wasson<sup>xxxiii</sup>, Crowley further conjectures that the main ingredient of “soma” is “fly agaric” also known as “Amanita Muscaria”, a mushroom commonly found in Siberia. Again, relying on the authority of Baron Ernst von Bibra<sup>xxxiv</sup>, Crowley mentions that “Among the various Siberian peoples who use Amanita Muscaria as a cultural norm, there exists a curious practice whereby the urine of one who has consumed the mushroom is drunk by another who consequently becomes inebriated. The urine of this person may then be drunk by another and so on, the procedure being repeated up to five or six times”.

So here again, one should not equate the haoma of the Yazashne with the soma ritual of Hinduism.

There is an oral tradition among some kshnoomists that in ancient Iran nirang was not used in the “nahn” ceremony before a child’s navjote, but that the “Haoma water” was used. Raham Asha<sup>xxxv</sup> refers to “Dengerd vi, M 496, which in turn refers to Yasna 9.26, “The Paoiryō.tkaesha, that is the ancient sages held thus: “Wearing the sacred girdle is this: as if the Kusti is united with man. And the Den is united with Haoma, and its unity is this: until he drinks Haoma he does not truly profess the Den. Drinking Haoma [is this]: to engage in worship”.

Over the centuries, several religious practices have been abandoned or amended.

The use of “baresman” or “barsom” for example, has undergone a drastic change! From using the barsom branches or twigs, which were held in the left hand, we now use wire rods placed on the “mahruī”. This was supposedly done because it was difficult to obtain the barsom branches.

In Sassanian Iran eight priests were required to perform the yazashne, today only two priests perform the ritual. So also, in Iran, the nirangdin was performed by seven priests with the Vendidad being performed over seven days, whereas in India it is performed by two priests in one day.

**Fargard XVII of the Vendidad requires hair and nails which have been cut to be buried a certain distance from fire, water and barsom. Today, we have yet to see anyone adhere to this practice!**

**In the Patet prayer there are specific admonishments from bringing “naso” in contact with fire or water or bringing fire or water in contact with naso. How pray, do the orthodox cleanse themselves after going through their daily ablutions?**

**If we are to consecrate a fire on North American soil, we will have to cease using gaomez and forget about its consecration to create nirang. We will have to have knowledgeable priests self-administer the bareshnum to each other and perform the yazashne ceremonies and then consecrate a fire on this continent.**

**In conclusion, therefore, if we are to maintain our religious traditions and create places of worship with consecrated fires in North America, we will have to abandon the practices started in India and adapt to the norms prevailing in North America, and just as our forefathers established new traditions after migrating to India, we will have to create new traditions on this continent. However, this does not mean that we throw the baby out with the bath water! Just as our forefathers sent emissaries to Iran, which resulted in the 78 Rivayats, we should most certainly consult with the high priests in India and follow their recommendations and suggestions, wherever practicable, not blindly but with forethought and understanding. After all, the heterodoxy of today will become the orthodoxy of tomorrow!**

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<sup>i</sup> Wikipedia, “Fire Temples”;

<sup>ii</sup> Mary Boyce, “On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of Fire”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 95, No. 3;

<sup>iii</sup> Herodotus, “The Histories” Vol 1;

<sup>iv</sup> Strabo, “East of the Caspian Sea: the Sacae and the Massagetae” *Geographica*, Vol. XI. Section 4;

<sup>v</sup> Richard C. Foltz, “Religions of the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century”;

<sup>vi</sup> Shaul Shaked, “Dualism in transformation: varieties of religion in Sasanian Iran”;

<sup>vii</sup> Mary Boyce, “On the Orthodoxy of Sasanian Zoroastrianism”;

<sup>viii</sup> The Epistles of Manuschihr;

<sup>ix</sup> *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, “Cleansing in Zoroastrianism”;

<sup>x</sup> Dr. Eugen Wilhelm, “On the use of Beef’s Urine according to the precepts of the Avesta and on similar customs

with other Nations” quoted by Sir J.J. Modi;

<sup>xi</sup> Ruttanshaw Kershaspi Dadachanji, “Relics of the Primitive Spirit Scaring Idea in the Avesta and in Prevalent Parsi

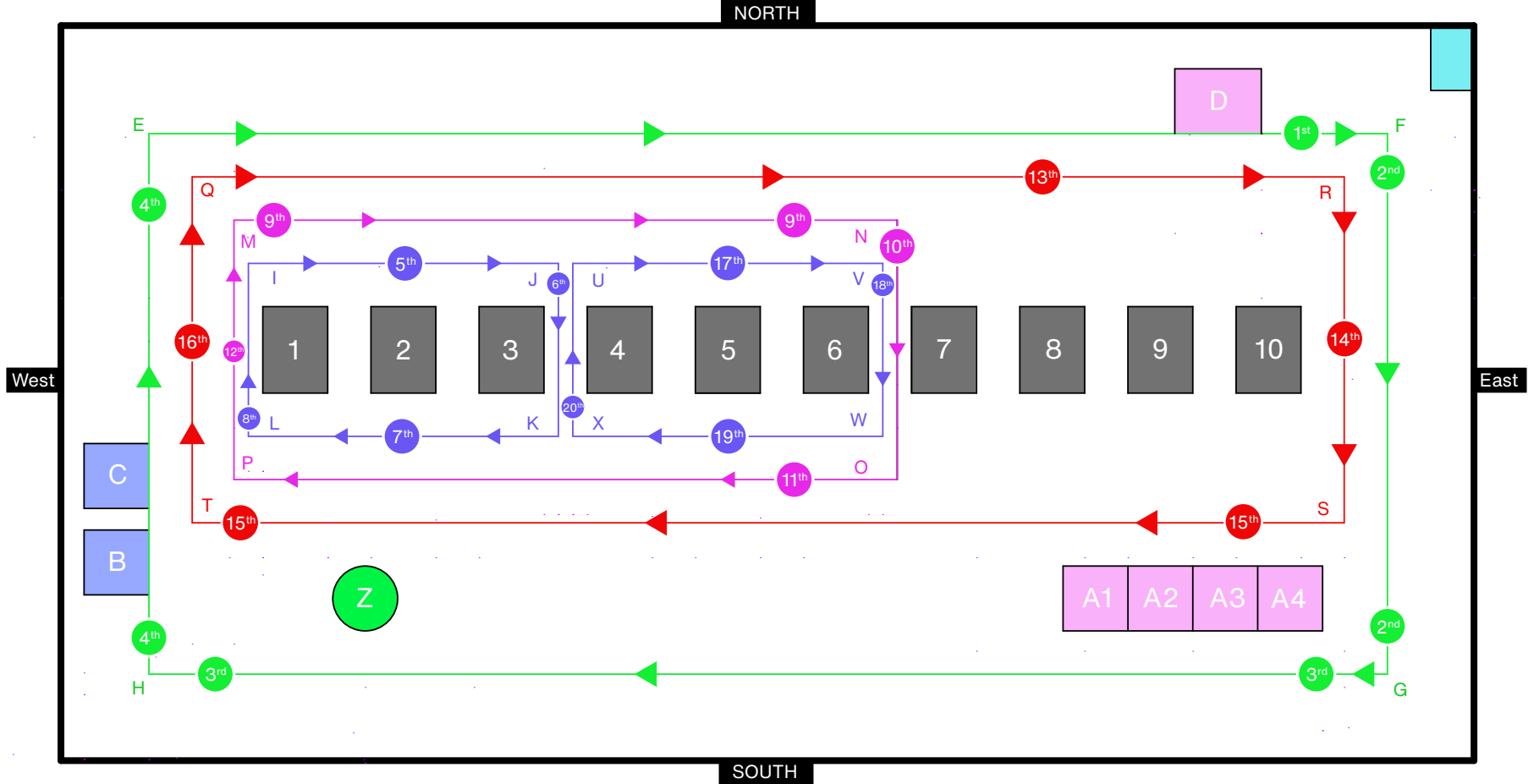
Practices”, *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, Vol IX, No: 5;



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- xii Rajani K. Dixit, "There is No Holy Cow in the Vedas" paper published on April 5, 2017;
- xiii Spiritual Science Research Foundation;
- xiv Yael Bentor, "Consecration of Images and Stupas in Indo-Tantric Buddhism";
- xv Shapurji Kavasji Hodivala, "Parsis of Ancient India";
- xvi Lt. Col. James Tod, "Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan" Book 4 Chapter 3;
- xvii Vishtasp Yasht, - 31, which refers to Vendidad Fargad VIII-13 and 37 to 39;
- xviii Vendidad Fargard V-51;
- xix Vendidad Fargard XIX-21;
- xx Sorabji Kavasji Khambata, "The Indian Antiquary, VII, 180" quoted in Sacred Books of the East;
- xxi Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, "The Religious Ceremonies and Practices of the Parsees";
- xxii George Ransom White, "Animal Castration";
- xxiii Richard Folz, "Zoroastrian Attitudes Towards Animals";
- xxiv Mary Boyce, "A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism" Chapter 5;
- xxv Mary Boyce, "A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism" Footnotes Chapter 5 ;
- xxvi Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, "The Religious Ceremonies and Practices of the Parsees";
- xxvii Rustom Paymaster, "Early History of the Parsees in India".
- xxviii B.N.Bhathena, "Kisse-Sanjan A Palpable Falsehood";
- xxix Mary Boyce and Firoze Kotwal, "Iranshah", Encyclopaedia Iranica 13;
- xxx Navan Fasli Atashkadeh Tatha Fasli Alat Banawani Napayadar Hilchal;
- xxxi Behramgore Anklesaria, pages 111 to 142;
- xxxii Mike Crowley, "When Gods Drank Urine";
- xxxiii R. Gordon Wasson, "Soma – Divine Mushroom of Immortality";
- xxxiv Baron Ernst von Bibra, "Plant Intoxicants";
- xxxv Raham Asha, "The Significance of the Sacred Girdle"

# BARESHNUMGAH

SCALE  
1:45



## LEGEND



FOR ZOTI

FOR FULIĀ, KAHĀRNĀ & NAOGARS  
SAND POMEGRANATE LEAVES

FOR ĀB-E-ANĀR, ĀB, ASH, ĀB-ZOR

FOR ZOTI | AFTER BATH



CANDIDATE  
TAKES AB-ANAR



CANDIDATE  
TAKES BAJ



FOR ZOTI TO BATHE



CANDIDATE  
DISROBES



BLACK TILES



ENTRANCE

# BARESHNUMGAH

SCALE  
1:50

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