

ZOROASTRIAN CALENDAR; EFFICACY OF AVESTA PRAYERS

Zoroastrian months are of 30 days except the last month of the year which is of 35 Days, the final five days being called Gathas. Zoroastrian year is of 12 months. But a period of 120 years showed an addition of one month, making that 125th year of thirteen months - the addition being called as Kabisa i.e. intercalation named in the Pehelvi language as 'Vahej'. In their Empire days two methods of intercalation were in vogue. One was concerned in the ceremonial affairs, the other was concerned in the worldly affairs.

One method was to add one day to every four years. This intercalation was rare even in the Empire days and was followed by great saints only. The other intercalation was to add one month to every 120 years. Eight such intercalations from the time of the Achaeminian Empire to the time of Sassanians Empire are perceived. We shall speak about these intercalations later on. The days of the months are named after the names of Yazats arranged in a role fixed according to their particular work in the creation. The names of the months are also named after the names of Yazats but fixed in a different role according to their special work done in the creation.

Parsis have three calendars named Kadimi, Shahenshai and Fasli. The difference is due to the observance or not of the intercalations. Fasli calendar is one in which one day is added to every four years. Hence it is in perfect harmony with the movements of the Sun in the starry vault. But it is not used for ceremonial purposes for reasons said below.

Kadimi calendar is one that is handed down to us from the Sassanian times but without intercalation. Shahenshai calendar is one month backward than the Kadimi calendar having been set up in India after 1006 AD. without intercalation. Out of these three calendars, the Kadimi and Shahenshai calendars are used for ceremonial purposes. Fasli calendar being Nature's calendar has full utility if lawfully established. The other two have become rather unnatural i.e. not in accordance with seasons and Sun's movements in the starry vaults. They show less utility than that of the Fasli calendar. The utility is counted in terms of the portion of the heavenly munificence that can be acquired or drawn from the heavens. Fasli calendar days governed by the authoritative Yazat draw full quota of munificence. The Kadimi and Shehanshai calendar days governed by certain other subordinate Yazats than those of the Fasal days draw only one third of the quota of munificence. A votary, if a good man, prays according to the Fasli calendar, he can draw full blessings through the authoritative Yazats of the day. The votaries of the other two calendars can draw only one-third portion of the blessings. Why is it so is explained very rationally thus. According to the Kshnumic philosophy of the Zoroastrian religion the affairs of Nature is managed by an assembly of 30 Yazats of which one becomes the president in a certain order. The president Yazat has the prerogative to give full quota of blessing on the day governed by him. The same day is also governed by all other 29 Yazats in the capacity of officers under the control of the president. These officers have only limited powers to bestow limited quota about one-third on the same day. Take for instance the Fasli calendar. The first day of the New Year is Ahurmazd of the first month Farvardin which corresponds to the 21st of March. On this day Ahurmazd is the president, the other 29 Yazats are officers under Him. Thus all the 30 Yazats work on the day but the president has the full power, the others under Him have limited power to bestow. If a votary prays according to fasal calendar i.e. recites the day as Ahurmazd in his prayer he gets the full quota of blessings from Ahurmazd. But if a votary prays according to the other calendars where the officer Yazats are taken as the day's Yazat he gets only a limited quota of blessings from them because they have limited control of the bestowal to the votary. Here then is made clear that Zoroastrian calendars are not meant only to show the time index and the index of the movements of the heavenly bodies but over and above that they are meant to be the means to the end of drawing heavenly blessings of the day and of the festivals not only for the votary but for the whole world. When a votary prays in the name of the Yazat of the day according to the three calendars the full or limited quota of blessings are drawn on the earth

thousands fold by the talismanic powers of the Avesta prayer, the power being named as Staot power and spread on this globe and also is spread on the votary. The Avesta prayers have the Staot power of reaching the Yazat and helping him in his natural work which is retaliated by the Yazat showering blessings upon him. It is not that only the votary gets the benefit, nay, the benefit, howsoever small, is first for the world and then for the votary. Every Mazdyasni ceremony from the Kusti prayers to the full big ceremonies performed on the days draw munificence of the day which is first for the world and then for the votary. The usefulness of the Fasli calendar as described above is only meant for singular divine persons only and not for the ceremonial purposes for the dead as will be described below.

The Avesta prayers are based on the laws of Staot Yasna which make them talismanic. The ultimate energy resulting from their recital called Ahunavar Staot is a great divine force which makes the prayer a special one, inasmuch as it has an affinity to the heavenly bliss which is drawn to the reciter. When they are recited according to the laws by an authorized priest or by a votary who has observed certain laws, the above said Staot energies are fully produced which are meant for the full world and also for the living or dead in whose name they are performed. Such is not the case with prayer said in the spoken ordinary languages which are concerned only with their special grammars but not with the laws of Staot Yasna. If such ceremonies or prayers are performed or said according to the days of Fasli calendar full benefit is possible to obtain. But if these are said on the days of the other two calendars limited benefit is possible to obtain. At the first sight this appears very strange. But the fact is that the munificence of the immortal heavens are stored in the twelve signs of the zodiac. The divine munificence are of various varieties meant for the benefit of various creatures. The different munificence say of different Ghambars and of different festivals are gathered in special signs of the zodiac. As an instance the munificence of the first Gahambar called Payanghah (पयंगह), i.e. milk of creation, is stored in the second sign etc. etc. When the planets related and highly disposed to the signs pass through them, the munificence stored becomes greatly augmented magnetized. And when Sun's influence, i.e. passage, occurs in, such signs they are showered on the earth manifesting particular Gahambar. Thus the munificence Payanghah of the first Gahambar named Maidiozarem (मईद्योजरेम) is stored up in the second sign of zodiac named Taurus (जुड़जे सओर – रासी वृषभ). Moon when passes and influences this sign he becomes ascendant (उंच थाय छे) and his lusture (जुर) is augmented. This augmented lusture of moon augments the Payanghah munificence of the first Gahambar situated in that sign ten fold and is stored in that augmented condition.

In the same way the munificence named Vastrodatanya (डुवते नामीआ the powers of groth) of the second Gahambar named Maidyo Shehem (मईद्यो शहेम) is stored up in the fourth sign of zodiac named Cancer (जुड़जे सरतात – कर्क रासी) Jupiter when passes and influences this sign he becomes ascendant (उंच थाय छे) and his (जुर) is augmented. This augmented lusture of Jupiter augment the munificence named Vastrodatanya otherwise named as (डुवते नामीआ) powers of growth of the second Gahambar ten fold and is stored there in that augmented condition.

In the same way the munificence named as Hayaya (हयय) or (डुवते मुसवरीआ) (power of giving shapes) of the third Gahambar Paitischem (पईतिशहेम) is stored up in the sixth sign of zodiac named Virgo (जुड़जे सुम्भाले – कन्या रासी) which are augmented ten times in lustre by Mercury which becomes ascendant in that sign.

In the same way the fourth Gahambar is Ayathrem (अयाथ्रेम), its munificence is named as Fraurvishttra (इउरवीशत्र) which furnishes the growth with its characteristic essence (named as

કુવ્વતે મુવલદયા). It is stored in the seventh sign Libra (બુરજે મિજન – તુલા રાસી) augmented ten fold in its lustre by Saturn which is ascendant in that sign.

In the same way the fifth Gahambar is named as Mailyarem (મઈદયારેમ). Its munificence is named as Sared સરેદ otherwise named as કુવ્વતે ખરીદક્રોજ્ત power predominant in the dealings of men with men and the nether world of animal, vegetable and mineral and with Nature at large. This munificent power of this fifth Gahambar is stationed in tenth sign of Capricornus (બુરજે જડી – મકર રાસી) which is augmented in strength by Mars who is in ascendance there.

The sixth last Gahambar is named as Hamaspath-maidem (હમસ્પથ મએદેમ) possessing the munificent powers of Areto Kareton (એરેતો કેરેતન) which are augmented ten fold in their working powers by Venus who is in ascendant there. When the Sun passes through the above mentioned signs, the respective munificence are showered down on the earth bringing about those particular Gahambers. It is thus that if the calendar is set appropos to the passage influence of the Sun full benefit can be drawn by the talisman of the prayer. If the calendar is not thus set the benefit is much reduced. The peculiarity of these calendars is that all months have 30 days and to the end of the year five days are added called Gathas. This arrangement is natural not from the stand point of the movement of Sun in the zodiac but from the stand point of the transference of the munificence from the zodiac to the earth. The Sun takes 365 days and nearly six hours to go round the zodiac. To pass every sign of the zodiac he does not take an equal amount of time i.e. he passes through some signs in 30 days and some seconds and through some in 31 days and some seconds. Thus his motion in the signs is not uniform. We have seen above that Ahurmazd has stored munificence in the signs. The signs not being of uniform length, some being bigger, the munificence in each is not of uniform quantity. The signs have 30 degrees but some have some minutes more. The Sun when passes through these signs, though takes 30 days and some seconds and 31 days and some seconds, as said above, the munificence he pours from each on the earth is of 30 degrees only. Thus the pouring of the munificence from each sign is uniform. Thus in the whole year of 12 months $30 \times 12 = 360$ degrees of munificence is poured. The remaining one-degree of munificence of the bigger signs is poured in the last five days of Gathas and the remaining munificence of the seconds is poured in one day after every four years. Thus though Sun's movement is of 30 days and 31 days from the sign, his work in nature of distributing munificence in the world is appropos to 30 degrees for a day, 365 degrees for a year and 24 hours after every four years for a Kabisa i.e. intercalation. Thus it is that on this model the Zoroastrian calendar is based. This calendar then is not arbitrary but quite natural. Since this calendar is natural it is a very powerful means together with 'Ratu Friti' prayers i.e. prayers of the just ripe time, to draw the munificence in abundance which is of course distributed by Nature in her just ways, the votary getting only a moiety. It is thus in keeping with Nature's justice that such Fasal calendar is not in vogue all the time as all time is not so virtuous as to get the full advantage. The rationale of this fact is as under:

The Zoroastrian monarchs as well as priesthood always reckoned the beginning of the new year from the time of the entry of the Sun through the node of the vernal equinox i.e. vernal equinoxcial point. The vernal equinox is the time when Nature's munificence begins to fall on the earth making the soil fruitful. The farmers produce good crops and can manage to defray the tax of the government easily and conveniently and the Zoroastrian religious ceremonies become very propitious for the dead and the living as the raining Nature's bounty can be effectively used for the benefit of the souls of the departed and of the living humanity and of the three nether kingdoms of animals, vegetables and minerals. The Solar year which begins from the entry of Sun in the vernal equinoxcial nodal point, is of 365 days 5 hours and 45 minutes and 45 seconds. But the sidereal year which begins from the entry of the Sun in the sign of Aries, is of 365 days 6 hours 9 minutes and 9 seconds. In the Zoroastrian calendar of the empire days the Solar was

taken into account. The Zoroastrian year consists of 365 days only, the last five days being named as five Gathas. The remaining 5 hours and some minutes amounted to a day every four years and one month every 120 years.

It is revealed in the Kshnumic philosophy of the religion that in a group of four years the Sun's movements from the vernal equinoxcial point for the first three years take 365 days to complete the circle i.e. return to the point of vernal equinox from which it started. But on the fourth year it takes 366 days to complete the above said circuit. It becomes late for a day when the evil activities of Ganamin prevail on the sanctified items of the religion like fire altars and their sanctified instruments, making them inert if the intercalation of a day is observed in the absence of holy athravans. It is hence that the intercalation every four years is not observed as holy proficient athornans of spiritual powers cannot be found. But in the empire days and after its fall upto 1005 AD. the addition of a month every 120 years was practiced when the last month of the current year did not coincide with the vernal equinox. But this addition differed in the case of the calendar used for the public use from that used for the religious purposes. Really speaking the addition of a month for the public calendar was not an addition but the shifting of the five end days of the last month of the year called Gathas which are shifted away from the equinoxcial point to the new position of the vernal equinox. Thus the Gathas were shifted from the receded position of their month from the vernal equinoxcial point to the position of the next month which ended at the vernal equinoxcial point. Thus the years always remained of 365 days. But in the calendar for the religious purposes one full month was added to the last month of the 120th year making that year of 13 months.

In this way in the calendar of general use the 5 Gathas shifted their position from month to month in order to keep their position at the vernal equinoxcial point. But in the calendar for religious use Gathas always kept their position after the last month of the year namely, Spendarmad which always was in keeping with the equinoxcial point.

The Pahelvi books of the ninth century do give some information about this intercalation which they name as 'Vahej'. But their information only gives evidence to the fact that the two kinds of Vahej (intercalation) did exist in the empire days and upto the year 1005 AD. They use the word Vahej both for the traveling Gathas month after month and for the fixed Gathas after the added last month. Albiruni a Perso Arab well known author of the 9th century is the only one who gives some description of the calendar from what he learnt about them from the Zoroastrians of the age when the religious knowledge was much forgotten from the Zoroastrians. He says that some say that the last month of the 120th year was of 13 months but many say that it was of 12 months. Albiruni says that the Sassanian monarchs found it very difficult to clamp the calendar as said above for which they had to expend not only much money but had to find out learned mobeds from the nook and corner of the empire. The author Albiruni does not give the description of the difficulty. He only mentions it. But we have described the nature of the difficulty above that there was much shortage of holy Athornans who can cope up with the attack of the dark side of the Nature on the consecrated items making them more etc. etc. This will explain why in Persia and India Vahej intercalation is left off and the calendar of 12 months called Hushmurdi is preserved. To add one day after the lapse of 4 years or a month after the lapse of 120 years only is not the proper procedure in the absence of fit and effective ceremonials by proper holy Athornans of spiritual power. Today nobody knows about the proper ceremonials and no proper spiritual Athornan can be met with who can perform those ceremonials effectively. In the ceremonial side of the religion there exists an Urvis Gah (ઉરવીસ ગાહ,) containing a Pav Mahel (પાવ મહેલ) charged with the 23 electro magnetic spiritual currents called Vispe Ratu (વીસ્પે રતુ) and Rathvya chakra (રથવ્ય ચક્ર) having 33 Alats (આલાત) i.e. spiritually inhabited instruments which constantly fight against the dark side of nature. Urvis Gah is a specially constructed talismanic room in the fire temple which can send messages to the higher heavens. The creation of such a Urvis Gah containing Pav-Mahel - Vispe-Ratu-Rathvya

chakra and Alats require holy Athornans who invoke Ahurmazd to implant His Yazats with their magnetic spiritual currents in the said talismanic area.

The invoking athravans of high spiritual power first of all become attune with the Yazat of the special day when the ceremony is begun. The holy Athornans after many spiritual baths and strict procedure succeed to be united with the special Yazat of the day, after which the special ceremonials are proceeded with to implant the Urvis Gah - Pav Mahel - Visp-e-Ratu-Rathavya Chakra and Alats with the Yazats and their spiritual electro magnetic currents. Here the Fasli calendar day ruled by a special Yazat and the holy Athornans are the basis of the holy procedure of erecting a Urvis Gah with its holy contents. It is this Urvis Gah which is assailed by Ganamin if a Vahej intercalation is to be performed and which requires holy Athravans for its protection.. One can imagine now the difficulty of 'Vahej' which the Sassanian Emperors had to cope up with. It is impossible to practice Vahej nowadays in face of the ghastly disbelief and ignorance of religious ceremonials and the entire dearth of even pure minded Athornans. Hence the keeping of the old establishment of Urvis Gah which can keep its usefulness five annas to a rupee, is not only necessary but incumbent for the upkeep of the Parsi race as Zoroastrians. If the calendar is changed by the Athornans, the base ground of Urvis Gah is done away with, with the result that the heavenly mansion is destroyed and the blessings of the religion no more can keep the Parsi race as Zoroastrian. The Urvis Gah is reduced to the stage of idol worship ୧୨୫୩୧୧.

The Urvis Gah is no more the residing place of Yazats and the whole place is reduced to fetish darkness.

It should be remembered that the singular behedin votary or votaries can change their calendar for Fasli roz-mah. But the priestly class who is affiliated to the Pav-Mahel of Hushmurdi calendar who has passed through the Navar (ନାବର) and Marateb (ମରାତେବ) ceremonies according to the Hushmurdi calendar cannot change his calendar for Fasli Roj-Mah due to reasons shown above.

- Taken from "A SEQUEL TO ESSENTIALS OF ZOROASTRIANISM" – By Dr. Saheb Framroze S. Chiniwalla.