

The Wedding Ceremony – ‘Ashirwad’

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The marriage ceremony starts with affirmations and commitments from the bride and groom, in the presence of family witnesses. The priests (left) then offer advice and admonitions followed by blessings and a benediction, as they shower the couple with rice and rose petals.

Bringing About *Frashokereti*

Ahura Mazda is represented on this earth by men and women who are regarded as fundamentally essential in furthering His work on earth. This makes the procreation of mankind through the bonds of marriage a very meritorious act. One cannot really be a true Zarathushti unless one fulfills one’s most important mission on this earth — procreation and raising of pious children who will bring about *Frashokereti* (renovation, resurrection). Celibacy is therefore discouraged. Even priests should marry, and only married priests, therefore were enjoined to perform weddings.

Asho Zarathushtra, himself a married man, emphasizes the spiritual significance of marriage in the Gathas [Yasna 53.3-6] on the occasion of his daughter, Pouruchisti’s wedding:

“May He grant you him (a husband) who has moorings in the Good Mind,
And is in unison with Asha and the Wise One.
Therefore follow the directions of your native intellect.
Bear these words in mind. Then you will attain
The (blissful) existence of Good Mind.
May each of you surpass the other in righteousness,
For this will prove advantageous for each.
These things are exactly true (for) men
And exactly (true for) women.
Deceit may appear attractive and advantageous,
But it alienates one from one’s person (soul)...
Happiness departs from those who are deceitful...
By any association with them, you will destroy your mental (spiritual)
world ...”

Thus, the tradition of giving admonitions and benedictions at the wedding comes directly from the prophet himself.

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The Affirmations

An assembly of family and friends, as well as 2 officiating priests, are a must, for any Zarathushti wedding to be solemnized, along with the mutual consent of the couple. The couple is asked, not once but thrice, if they are marrying of their own free will and if either one of them suggests otherwise, the ceremony cannot proceed. Free will lies at the very basis of the Gathas, and so it is natural that the wedding is also based on free choice. This part of the ceremony can be translated as follows:

May the Lord be pleased.

Truth is good. Truth is best. Truth is happiness.

Happiness comes to those who are good
for the sake of being good.

May the Creator Ahura Mazda bestow upon you: progeny, plenty of income, sincere friendship, a body with a handsome face and a long life of one hundred and fifty years. On the day __ of the month _____ of the year _____ in the town of _____, this gathering has met in accordance with the law and custom of the Zarathushti religion to give this woman _____ as wife.

The head priest asks the groom's 'witness':

Have you agreed to take care of² _____ all through her life?

The groom's witness replies:

Yes, I have agreed.

The head priest asks the bride's witness:

Do you sincerely pledge with truthful thought, word and deed, and for the promotion of righteousness, to give this woman in marriage to _____ for life?

The bride's witness replies:

Yes, I have given the pledge.

The head priest inquires of the bride and groom:

2 The Pazand *ashirwad* calls for 2000 Dirams of pure white silver and (only) 2 Dinars of real gold of Nishapur coinage, while the Pahlavi *ashirwad* refers to 2000 gold Dinars [K. N. Kanga, 1859] — apparently a mistake in transcription, as it is too excessive an amount even for our own times. It is unclear as to who is required to pay this amount. The Pazead suggests it is the bridegroom, while in the Sanskrit, which follows the Pazand for the Parsis, it is the bride, denoting a Hindu influence. The Pahlavi and Pazand term (6a Paemane) could stand for both “contracting to pay or receive”. And the Sanskrit “with coins” (Suwarnamih) denotes both “along with coins” as well as “in exchange of coins”. In any event, most of the Parsis and their priests do not know Zand Avesta and this clause is neither understood nor practiced by them.

Have you chosen this lifelong commitment with true thinking —
"Pasandey Kardam"?

The bride and groom reply:

Yes, we both have chosen so.

The Admonitions

Two priests, who are traditionally the bride's family priests, offer advice and admonitions to the couple:

In the name of Ahura Mazda,
May both of you experience joy and progress in life.
Be ever full of glory (*Khoreh*),
Be ever full of good blessings,
Be ever full of growth and prosperity,
Be successful, be learned in practicing righteousness,
Be worthy of performing good deeds.

Think thoughts that reflect the good mind,
Speak words that reflect good speech,
Do acts that reflect good action,
Drive away all evil thoughts,
Look down upon all evil words,
Scorch all evil actions, denounce sorcery,
Proclaim yourselves to be Mazda worshippers.

Do your work with an attitude of perfection,
And be prompt in doing your duty,
Accumulate wealth righteously,
In the presence of elders, be truthful and obedient
In the presence of friends,
Be humble, respectful and benevolent.

Do not slander, do not be angry,
Do not commit sins to avoid shame,
Do not be greedy, do not harrass anyone,
Do not practice the evil of jealousy,
Do not be arrogant, do not show false pride,
Do not give in to lust,
Do not misappropriate someone else's wealth,
Keep away from another's wife.

Perform your own work with diligence,
Do good to those who are pious and virtuous,
Do not quarrel with a revengeful person,

Do not be a partner with an avaricious person,
Do not keep the company of a slanderer,
Do not associate with a person of ill repute,
Do not have anything to do with an ignorant person,
Follow the principle of justice even with your enemies,
With friends, be guided by their preferences,
Do not enter into argument with a quarrelsome person.

Speak in a mature manner before an assembly,
Before kings, speak with moderation,
Be more illustrious than your father,
Do not in any way displease your mother,
Ensure your salvation by following Truth,
Be of immortal body like Kae Khushru,
Be intuitive like Kaus,
Be brilliant as the sun, be pure as the moon,
Be renowned as Zarathushtra, be strong as Rustom,
Be fertile as the earth (governed by) Spendarmad,
Be as much in unison with friends, brothers, wife and
children, as the body is with the soul.

Always be of good faith and good character,
Recognize Ahura Mazda as the Lord,
Praise Zarathushtra as the spiritual leader,
Denounce Ahriman as an evil being.

Blessings in the Name of the Angels For Each Day of the Month

May you secure Ahura Mazda's friendship and help,
May Behman (Good Mind) grant you good thoughts,
May Ardibehest (Best Truth) bless you with good speech,
May Shahrevar (Desirable Rule) lead to worthy achievement,
May Spendarmad (Beneficent Piety) grant you wisdom,
May Khordad (Perfection) bestow sweetness and amiability,
May Amardad (Immortality) give you fertility.

May Daepadar (Divine Illumination) bestow gifts upon you,
May Adar (Inner Fire) give you ever-increasing splendor,
May Ardivisur (Water) grant you immaculate purity,
May Khurshid (the Sun) grant you dignity fit for a king,
May Mohr (the Moon) bless you with a generous, giving nature (like the
cow),
May Tir (Star Sirius) guide you to right charity,

May Gosh (Animal Kingdom) make you abstain from sin.
 May Daepmehr (Divine Justice) bestow gifts upon you,
 May Mehr (Angel of Justice and Light) grant you power to hear with
 justice,
 May Sroasha (Hearkening) lead to obedience, protection,
 May Rashne (Truth) make you advance in truth,
 May Fravardin (Divine Essence in Man) lead you to progress in spiritual
 strength,
 May Behram (Enemy Smiter) grant you triumph,
 May Ram (Peace) make you revel in spiritual ecstasy,
 May Govad (Good Atmosphere) give you speed and power.
 May Daepdin (Divine Conscience) bestow gifts upon you,
 May Din (Conscience) grant you wisdom and enlightenment,
 May Ashishvang (Blessing) grant you treasures, great glory,
 May Astad (Justice) grant you treasures of great talent,
 May Asman (Sky) make you highly industrious,
 May Jamyad (Earth) grant you regularity that go with time and space,
 May Marespand (Prayers) give you good insight,
 May Aneran (Endless Light of Heaven) give you soundness of body.
 May you be worthy of attaining the height of lustre,
 May you remain worthy of (spiritual) enlightenment,
 May you be enlightened with all good thoughts, all good words and all
 good deeds,
 May the worst of worst evil never reach you,
 May the worst of worst evil never reach us.

Let the community, inspired and invigorated (by the Prophet's teachings)
 lend support to the Zarthushti men and women, and to the furtherance of good
 thought, which leads to the desirable prize (salvation). I pray for the mighty
 prize of Truth, which is highly prized by Lord Ahura Mazda (Himself). May
 God grant this person splendor and glory, strength of the body, health of the
 body, victory of the body, abundant happiness, progeny with inborn wisdom,
 longest life and the best heaven of righteous people, bright and full of
 happiness.

Afrin Buzorgan — Blessings Naming Illustrious Ancestors

This blessing is in the name of Hormazd the Creator.
 May you fulfill your desires, just as Hormazd the Creator fulfilled His with
 regard to His creation.
 Be auspicious and most excellent like Kae Khushru,

Be full of truth and justice like the Angel Meher,
 Be a vanquisher of enemies like Zarir,
 Be of good religion like Shiavax, be holy like Vishtasp,
 Be strong like Sam, son of Nariman,
 Be full of vigor like Rustom; and be an excellent lancer like Aspandiar,
 patron of the religion.
 Be a wise foreteller like Jamasp,
 Be innocent like the righteous Fravashi,
 Be charitable like the Angel Teshtar,
 Be gentle like the rain, be far-seeing like the sun,
 Be a doer of good deeds like Zarathushtra,
 Have a long life like Zarvan (Ruler of Time),
 Be fertile like Spendarmad, the Mother Earth.
 Have many connections like the river with many tributaries,
 Be well stocked up, like (during) the Winter season,
 Be happy like the Spring season,
 Be fragrant like musk, be precious like gold.
 Be readily acceptable like the Deram (silver coin),
 Be efficient like Hormazd in His own creation.

May you both and the whole assembly enjoy a long life of a thousand years. May you make all those who serve you happy. May you enjoy high status, and be recognized to be as delightful as the pure basil (marjoram) and amber. May you be blessed with pious children who will preserve your country and defeat the enemy, and foster peace.

Doa Tandarosti — Benediction

The officiating priests shower the couple with rose petals and rice from a silver tray, as they recite the Doa Tandarosti benediction.

In the name of God, the merciful, the forgiving and the compassionate. With the help of God, to the bridegroom _____ and the bride _____ may there be a life of a thousand years full of health of body and soul. May there be glory along with righteousness.

O! Omniscient Creator, may delight, joy, comfort, happiness and goodness reach them and may they have higher glory, power, law of good authority, courage and victory. May there be good result with the aim of knowledge of the good Maz- dayasni religion. May there be lawful union and children and long life, glory and progressive development of the soul.

O! All-knowing God, may Zarathushtra's religion be prosperous. O! God of all the world, with your help, may the bride-groom and the bride have the longest of long life, health and happiness lasting for a thousand years.

May you assume the leadership of the worthy person for many years and

for many ages. May there be thousands and thousands of benedictions. May the year be auspicious, the day blessed and the month happy. For many days, for many months, for many years, may the functions of the Yasna rituals, the Nyiash prayers and acts of charity be fittingly performed.

Keep all good deeds imbued with a sense of righteousness and importance. Health be unto him, goodness be unto him, excellence be unto him. May this my wish be in accord with the will of the Ameshaspands.

The ceremony ends with the bride and groom exchanging wedding rings. Then friends and family come to the stage and wish the newly-weds happiness.