

ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT "ON WINGS OF FIRE" IN A NUTSHELL

One of the reasons why "A Quest For Zarathushtra" was re-christened "On Wings of Fire", according to its director, Cyrus Bharucha, was that the yankees (for whom the film is obviously primarily made) couldn't pronounce the name of the Prophet! They got stuck after "Zara..."! So, to oblige them (otherwise no one would have gone to see the "hero" Zubin Mehta!), the title was changed. Why the new title? We are not sure. But on the screen, a justification is sought right in the beginning by showing the so-called symbol of the Farohar from whose wings tongues of flames emerge!

The film was brought to India by its director in January, 1986. He was blissfully unaware that the Council of Vigilant Parsis, which was the only organisation keeping track of the film since the shooting began 1982-end, was hot on his trail.

For, at the end of January 1986, when the COVP learned that a preview of the uncensored film was to be held at the Air India auditorium, it took up the issue with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, as it is an offence to screen a film without the censors' certificate. The first blow against the sacrilegious film was struck. The preview was all but cancelled: instead of the 100 persons, including the B.P.P. Trustees, invited, just about thirty and odd were permitted to see it!

For more than a year the COVP had corresponded with the Chairman of the Central Board of Film Certification objecting particularly against the two most revolting scenes — that of Prophet Zoroaster and the other of Doongerwadi.

But what the COVP did for the last three years was hardly ever conveyed to the community, firstly because it believes in working silently, and secondly because, it did not want the opposite party to pre-empt or forestall its actions. This apprehension of the COVP was amply borne out in June 1986 when other organisations began

to jump on the COVP bandwagon and publicising their activities in the press and from the platform. Thus, a day before the Writ Petition was to be filed against the film in the Bombay High Court, a caveat was filed by the respondents, thereby upsetting, to some extent, the appercart of the petitioners.

How the writ petition was rejected and the subsequent appeal dismissed without giving any reasons, is recent history and need not be retold here.

What is worth mentioning and what a couple of Khshnoom-fidayie connected with the suit remembered was the late Ustad Saheb Behramshaji's admonition that in present times, lawsuits pertaining to religious matters should be avoided. If one still went ahead with a case, it would invariably result in defeat!

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