

Dr. Framroze S. Chiniwalla

A Centenary Tribute

(On the occasion of the birth centenary of the late Dr. Framroze Sohrabji Chiniwalla, who was born on the 20th April, 1881, DINI AVAZ has pleasure in publishing a special tribute to this doyen of Khshnoom.)

I had never seen him, let alone met him. And yet, there is not another whom I would call my posthumous mentor. To my eternal regret, I, who had spent a part of my childhood living opposite the Dadyseth Atash Behram, which Dr. Framroze S. Chiniwalla, affectionately known as "Doctor Saheb", visited frequently, cannot recollect having had even a glimpse of him! My only solace is possessing a photograph of him, given by a kind friend — the photograph which never fails to fascinate me, because of a peculiar auric splendour surrounding his serene face. From that and a handful of stories I have read and heard about him, I am able to form a reasonably reliable word-picture of this greatest of true scholars of the Zoroastrian Religion — the only soul on earth blessed by Nature with the gift of revealing the Ta'wil of the Zoroastrian scriptures.

Ta'wil is a technical term meaning, the bringing into play of the faculty of perception, which necessarily is available only to spiritually evolved persons. Etymologically, the word means, "to bring back" the data to their origin, to their archetype, to their donor. Hence the ta'wil is pre-eminently the hermeneutics of symbols, the exegesis, the bringing out of hidden spiritual meaning. And Dr. Saheb was the hermeneutist par excellence of the Zoroastrian scriptures!

Born a 100 years ago, on the 20th April, 1881 in Poona in the house of his maternal grandfather, Dadabhai B. Bastawalla, Fram-

roze grew up in a typical Zarathoshti environment. Besides his maternal grandparents, his parents and paternal grandparents, too, were devout, staunch Zarathushtrians, following all the tariqats and reciting the Manthra-vani 5 times a day. All this left an indelible impression on the mind of the young lad.

What's more his supreme good fortune brought him to Surat for his school education. When Nature wants to bring together two evolved souls, no power can prevent her from doing so. And so it came to pass that Framroze joined the very Presbyterian Mission High School where Manchershah Palloji Kaikobad (Master) was the Head Master. Little did they know then that a few years hence, their lives would be revolutionised by a person whom they'll call their "Ustad" and who would reveal for the first time the arcane science of the ancient Iranians and the esoteric philosophy of the sublime Zoroastrian religion.

After his matriculation, Framroze came to Bombay and joined the Wilson College from where he graduated in Arts. At that time his paternal grandpa, Eduljee A. Chiniwalla, induced him to become a Doctor. He, therefore, joined the Grant Medical College and obtained the L.M.S. degree. Finally, he became an ophthalmic surgeon and began his practice on Hornby (now Dadabhai Naoroji) Road.

Since his father had a shop in Surat, Framroze used to visit that town regularly. When in the first decade of this century Ustad Sahéb Behramshahji began making startling revelations in Surat's Baug-e-Parsa Adaran, Manchershah Master introduced young Framroze to Behramshah. That was

the fateful moment when the Ustad discovered his ace disciple. Since then, Framroze never looked back. While he treated middle and poor class people free of charge for their various eye troubles and became popular as an eye surgeon, he went on to assimilate very easily some of the most abstruse chapters of the beatific **Khshnoom**. Along with that, he made an intensive study of Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazend and Persian languages.

A dark cloud, however, did cross his path during the Ustad's lifetime, when he lost his first wife. He was so grief-stricken that he locked up his consulting room and went to Surat to drink deep at the fount of **Khshnoom** with the help of his Ustad. The secret of Dr. Saheb's fantastic grasp of the esoteric **Ilm** was the **Ataa** he possessed on account of the special benedictions bestowed on him by the **Saheb-Delans** and **Ashavans**

of the Demavand Koh themselves!

The result was that while Ustad Behramshah unravelled unusual mysteries of the Zoroastrian scriptures, his star shagird, later, for the first time, brought out the ta'wil of these scriptures. Here, it must be stated that while Framroze went on writing voluminously, his younger brother, Jehangirji (the celebrated editor of **Parsi Avaz**), who, too, was blessed by the Ustad and the **Abeds** of Demavand, stood by him like a doughty knight-errant. It has been rightly said that Framroze, though a **Behdin**, lived and worked like an **Athornan**; and Jehangirji was the gallant warrior, a **Rathaeshtar**, who fought and won many a battle for his beloved **Mazdayasni Deen**!

In later life, Framroze, who was unfortunate enough in losing even his second wife, had converted his consulting room into a makeshift study. He stayed with Jehangirji's

family and followed a Spartan daily routine : wake up very early in the morning, recite the Avesta Manthra upto nine o'clock, study and work till lunch time. In the afternoon, catch a 'C' route (now No. 123) bus to Flora Fountain, get off at C.T.O. and walk to his consulting room in Commissariat Building. He would then recite his Farajyat prayers, put the kettle on the boil and continue writing ceaselessly, till late evening. On returning home, he would once again recite his prayers and work upto 11.00 p.m.!

That 'Dr. Saheb' was truly an inspired writer, no one can disprove. His plethora of published and unpublished works running into hundreds of thousands of words bear ample testimony to this. The Niagara of words that poured out of his pen covered every topic of the Zoroastrian Religion and Iranian History. There was no Avesta or Pahlavi work, which he had not examined. **Though his style was involved, there wasn't a single inconsistency in all that he wrote!**

Among some of Dr. Chiniwalla's major published works can be counted: (a) **Nikiz-i-Vehdin** (2 volumes); (b) **Khordeh Avesta Ba Khshnoom Ta'wil**; (c) **Vendidad**; (d) **Essential Origins of Zoroastrianism**; (e) **Yazashne**; (f) **Dakhma's exalted Talesam**, etc. etc. In **Frasho-Gard**, he wrote 555 pages of the history of Iran, according to the ta'wil of **Zarvan-e-Daregho Khadaat** and threw a completely new light on Iranian dynasties.

Dr. Saheb was simplicity and modesty personified. His life should be an object lesson to all Khshnoom enthusiasts. If they want to disseminate the esoteric Ilm, they should be ready to sacrifice a great deal of their time, energy and money. They should be prepared to face taunts, jibes and even ingratitude from their own fellow-Zoroastrians. Khshnoom Faeshi is not for those who indulge in outward show or seek self-

publicity and the comforts of modern life. Framroze sacrificed and suffered a great deal from his jealous detractors, but he carried on the onerous duty entrusted to him by his Ustad, undauntedly. Once when a conference of scholars of the Religion was in progress, Framroze was asked by a friend, why he kept out of it, Framroze gave a characteristic reply, "Arre-Bawa, ahin ab-e-rava (pure, sanctified water) chhodiney hun gutter nun paani kaain peewa jaaun?"

This great Patriarch of **Khshnoom** died at the age of 81 on the 6th August 1962. **There was none before him of his calibre and competence. There is none today who can take his place. "He was a man, take him all in all. We shall not look upon his like again".**

— Adi Doctor.

PERSIAN RIVAYATS

The word rivayat is a Persian — Arabic hybrid word, from Phl. rawak, Mod. Pers. rava 'current' with Arabic nominal suffix generally meaning 'what is current, tradition, custom, practice.' In the 15th-17th centuries the Parsi priests of India sent emissaries to Iran, and addressed a number of enquires on religion, ceremony, scripture, customs, and practices to the priests of Iran lengthy and detailed replies thereto were received from time to time, and the literature thus formed of these questions and replies is termed 'Rivayat'. The first Rivayat was brought in 1478 by one Nariman Hoshang, a resident of Broach. This Rivayat is known after him. 'The Rivayat of Nariman Hoshang.' Similarly, other Rivayats are known after the persons who brought them. Some Rivayats are anonymous, as the persons who brought them are not known. During the course of three centuries (15th-17th) about twenty-two Rivayats came to India.

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