

KHSHNOOM CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS.

A FEAST OF RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMES.

In Parsi Pukar Vol. 11-1 published in February 2006, your humble editor referred to Ustad (Master) Saheb Baheramshah Navroji Shroff of Surat who opened the treasure chest of Ilm-e-Khshnoom 100 years ago, at Baag-e-Parsaa Aderaan Saheb in Surat. For 100 years, the 'Cherag' - lamp of Khshnoom is spreading its spiritual, mystical and devotional light in the hearts of those Parsis, who are blessed to receive and absorb it, and live by it. As many as five Institutions are carrying on the work of propagation of Khshnoom :

- (i) **"Ilm-e-Khshnoom Felavnari Committee"** which was established by the late leader Jehangir Vimadalal in 1930 and at present chaired by Dastoorji Meherjirana of Navsari. It publishes standard books on Khshnoom.
- (ii) **"Dini Avaz Committee"**, the publishers of the quarterly magazine Dini Avaz, since 31 years.
- (iii) **"Parsi Pukar Committee"**, the publishers of this humble quarterly, Parsi Pukar, since ten years.
- (iv) **"Mazdayasni Connection"**, which publishes a magazine bearing that name, from California, since last 25 years.
- (v) **"Zarthoshti Din Sahitya Mandal"**, the publishers of Khshnoomic books.

The first three also organise Jashans, lectures and other religious functions with the main aim of keeping the Cherag of Khshnoom ever glowing in the dark night of ignorance.

The fourth, **Mazdayasni Connection** keeps the torch of Khshnoom ever sparkling in USA now the home-land of many Parsis. Its founder and worker, Mrs. Silloo Mehta, is an exceptionally remarkable woman of 69, with a heart immersed in deep devotion for the Zarthoshti Din and all other Dins; and overflowing with intense love for all the humans and all the Creation of God. She has studied Khshnoom in its inner depth. Her very presence silently but strongly emanates love and devotion towards Asho Zarathushtra and His Din. She is a kind of spiritual guide to many Parsis of America and lovingly advises them in the matters of Religion. Her magazine Mazdayasni Connection started in 1982, has no subscription fee. It is printed and posted free of charge; of course, donations do arrive from generous people. Please see page 4 which is the Foreward of Vol. 25 - No. 4 (Winter 2006), where the Magazine describes humbly and earnestly its mission.

This year of the aforesaid 100 years celebrations synchronises with the 25th year of Silloo's Mazdayasni Connection. She was inspired to celebrate both the occasions in a grand manner supported by the other four Committees. On 30th and 31st December 2006 and 1st January 2007, programmes featuring Religious Cultural and Historical Exhibition, Lectures and Entertainment were held at Dadar Palamkot Hall and the adjoining Athornan Madresa. Pages 2 and 22 carry the English and Gujarati Reports of the celebrations.

AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE KHSHNOOM CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS.

THE SPONSOR, MAZDAYASNI CONNECTION OF CALIFORNIA, EXPLAINS.

[The following was the letter published by Silloo Mehta explaining the aim and object of the Khshnoom Centenary Celebrations. Mark the earnest and sincere desire to serve and devotion to ignite, sparkling from her words, like a Sweet Fire. – Editor]

Centuries have come and gone; kingdoms have risen and fallen since the advent of Asho Zarathushtra on earth. The Zarathushti religion has stood steadfast against the test of time. Parsis, though a miniscule minority, are considered a remarkable community of achievers spread all over the world. We have a very rich heritage of which we can all very justifiably be proud. We are the descendents of the likes of Jamshid, Faridoon, Cyrus, Darius and also of latter day saints like Dasturji Kukadaru, Azar Kaiwan, Meherjirana and many other such spiritual giants. Those were the days...

At present, we are living merely in the shadows of the past. Our past glory has faded and gone as we have discarded the age-old and time tested religious teachings, practices, customs and traditions to which our ancestors strictly adhered.

The decay in the community started in the early part of the 20th century. When the winds of materialism were beginning to sweep over India, when Christian missionaries, science and technology were puncturing holes in the Zarathushti faith, it was the arrival of a simple Parsi from a priestly family in Surat that brought about a revival of the faith. His name was **Behramshah Nowroji Shroff**. For the first time, the priests and laity understood the rationale behind the various traditions, customs

and tarikats (spiritual disciplines). He explained the inner and esoteric meaning of various prayers and rituals, and widely promoted the faith meaningfully. He was later known as 'Ustad Saheb'.

Dastur Dr. Hormazdyar K. Mirza, in a treatise titled, *The Zoroastrian Religious Studies*, writes, "The Ustad Saheb's expositions revived and restored the waning faith of the Zoroastrians. He kindled a torch of religious faith, which burns till now with spiritual brilliance. He instilled religious fervor, enthusiasm and zeal amongst the Zoroastrians. The religious philosophy expounded by the Ustad Saheb, is generally known as Zarathoshti Ilm-e-Khshnoom – 'The Zoroastrian Wisdom of Bliss.'"

Where did he acquire such phenomenal knowledge of the Zarathushti religion? By some strange circumstances, he was taken to the Masters (Abed Sahebs) who live a pious and secluded life in an unknown area in the recesses of the holy Mt. Damavand in Iran. Behramshahji lived among the Masters for more than three years and acquired a deep understanding of the ancient Zoroastrian lore. From an illiterate boy, he was transformed into an Ustad (teacher), who, during his lifetime, fascinated scholars like **K. R. Cama** and **Khodabux Punegar**, among others, with his deep understanding of the Zarathushti religion.

It is now a century since Behramshahji lifted the lid of the treasure-chest of Khshnoom in 1906-07. The knowledge of Khshnoom has been flowing since, during and after his lifetime. The Chiniwalla and Masani brothers and many others have continued the work of spreading Ilim-e-Khshnoom – the science or religious lore that brings spiritual wisdom and inner bliss.

Now, 100 years later, we are planning **the centenary celebrations in Mumbai on Dec 30, 31, 2006 and Jan 1, 2007 at the Palamkote Hall and the Dadar Athornan Madressa.** We are also celebrating the completion of **25 years of The Mazdayasnie Connection.**

Program for the three days will include a grand exhibition showcasing the various doctrinal and ritual aspects of the religion with the help of audio/visual aids in addition to lectures by popular and learned speakers, entertainment and food. Admission to all these is free for children, seniors and the deserving. Many of you are aware of the services the Mazdayasnie Connection has rendered to the community and the number of lives it has

touched. **This project is our biggest venture, a Herculean task undertaken as a humble tribute and gratitude to the fount of Khshnoom and its propagator.**

The event is planned also to rouse the slumbering souls of some of our co-religionists, inflaming enthusiasm with a renewed vision; answering the seekers and bringing together our community members with abundance of love and understanding; an energizing dawn of fresh beginnings and new possibilities.

Could you please open yourself to the full measure of that hope and dedication, and share with us the joy and reward that comes from giving? Charity for the cause of spreading religion is a gift that outlasts millennia and reaches into the hearts and lives of your co-religionists.

"What we have is the gift from Him to us and what we do with what we have, is our gift to Him."

Sincerely,

Silloo

LATE JAMSHED MEHTA OF KARACHI ON BAHERAMSHAH SHROFF

These were Silloo's words written before the celebrations took place. Yes, the functions on the three days 30-12, 31-12-2006 and 1-1-2007 were a huge Herculean undertaking, which only Silloo's determination, diligence, and tenacity could lead to the grand success that was achieved on the three days. Silloo has enlivened the following words of the great Parsi, the Late Jamshed Mehta known as the father of Karachi, written in Baheramshah Shroff Frashogard Memorial Volume (1930) (originally in Gujarati) :

"Respected Ustad Baheramshah entered this world without any pomp and ceremony, became known in the same way and passed away in the same peace.

Ustad Baheramshah was the only person who revealed the Zarthoshti Dharma in its true light.

Ustad was saying verily that the right guide on the Path was his Ustad and that he was only obediently carrying out the commands of the true and perfect Guide, Sraoshavarez Marzbaanji

Whatever Ustad Baheramshah has given to us - whatever gifts he has bestowed on us- if we can utilise them, we can make our life rewardful.

For that what is needed is : the faith on Ustad Saheb of the Ustad, faith on the Ustad himself (though he has left his body), his remembrance at every breath, our application to him for his guidance, constant strenuous study of his teachings and exertion to observe the 'tarikats' taught by him."

**‘MAZDAYASNI CONNECTION’ A 25 YEAR OLD ZARTHOSHTI
MAGAZINE FROM CALIFORNIA (USA) WITH NO
SUBSCRIPTION CHARGE.**

WHAT IS IT AND WHY?

Man is sent on this earth with a Divine Plan and purpose. He has, at some point in time, a goal to achieve. The goal is known by different names as – *Farshogard, Nirvana, Mukti*, God-realization and so on. Common man who is not evolved spiritually (not sufficiently at least) is not able to see the goal and does not know how to go about it. But his **RELIGION** and his **PROPHET** have prescribed a path to tread on. **It is a way of life he has to adopt during his stay on earth if he wishes to come nearer his goal.**

The inner craving you find sometimes in you to know about your religion is not just a passing thought. It is the vibrating of some spiritual energy within you trying to awaken you. It is the Prophet Zarathushtra’s Divine energy deep within trying to break your shell of ignorance and show you the Light of God.

Zoroastrian Religion is not just a simple three-fold commandment of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, as commonly understood. It is Life itself. *Din* or *Daena* is the word for religion. Whatever we think, speak or do is an act of Religion. In doing that, we either follow the teachings of our Prophet and go nearer Him, or have defied them and gone away from Him. In either case, it is connected with Religion. We do not and should not renounce love, wealth, family ties, to seek so intangible a thing as the meaning of life. Yet all of us can, and ultimately must, become concerned about the most basic and the most ancient of

human questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of my existence? What is the cause of human suffering? What is the cosmic justice that underlies all human affairs?

Our humble efforts in the publication of *The Mazdayasnie Connection* was born out of an intense desire to share with fellow Zarathushtis the ecstasy and divine joy embedded in the teachings of our great religion that reveal answers to such riddles. But those who desire such fruit must be willing to read the explanations, the why and the how, even if they are lengthy. As seekers to the Riddles of Life, would we be content with short superficial explanations? There are no short cuts to anything, and nothing worthwhile could ever be achieved without persistent efforts.

Our late Ustad Behramshah Navroji Shroff taught the knowledge of our Religion called “*Khshnoom*” in Avesta. It explains the religion in its highly mystic development. The word “*Khshnoom*” is found in the Gathas, where it is venerated as the Word of God, taught by the great prophet Spitaman Zarathushtra and his great co-workers. The subject-matter here, therefore, is presented in this light of *Khshnoom*, which is the key to understand the words pregnant with technical interpretations and the mysticism.

– **Silloo Mehta**
Founder-Editor

100 YEARS OF KHSHNOOM PROPAGATION.

A SHORT REPORT OF THE THREE DAYS CELEBRATIONS

“Oh! 30th and 31st December? And 1st January, new year 2007? Arre? “You will get hardly 25 Parsis in the audience”. “It is very very doubtful”. “All Parsis will go for dancing”.

“Vain efforts! ફાલ્સી છે”. “Exhibition?”. “Arre! we have seen many here”. “Will you be selling Sadra Leghas in the exhibition?”. “Who will be the caterer? What will be the menu?” “Sorry! Cant help. Leave me alone.”

Thus spake the worldly wiseacres, the pompous pessimists, the censorious critics, the dejected despondents, and the airy arrogants. Little did they know the capacity, capability and dauntlessness of Silloo Mehta of Clifornia. But I knew all that. I have been observing since 25 years that this lady can achieve the impossible. Whatever project she undertook, it came out successful beyond expectation.

The reason is : She is divinely inspired and helped. With a heart burning with the Fire of Ilm-e-Khshnoom and Zarthoshti Din, a mind vibrating with amazingly novel ideas, an organising obility bursting with zealous energy, and a pure and serene motive to feed the spiritually hungry, she works doggedly to attain her aim in spite of tremendous difficulties in the way. The Higher Forces are made to rush to her help.

No community survives without its own Religion, culture and identifying way of life. We are the only community which do not teach Religion to its children. We seem to have been lost in the thick fog of ignorance and hypocrisy. Yet the three days of Khshnoom Centenary Celebrations at Dadar Athornan Madresa and Palamkot Halls, just flashed a ray of hope. The presence of so many Parsis at the novel exhibition reflecting our Religion and its spiritual Institutions and doctrines, and the lectures; drama and dinner indicated that we are trying

to find out ourselves. Was it “a lost and found” episode? May the Saheb-Delaan of Daemavand help us to find our lost path.

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The programme opened on 30-12-2006 at 11 a.m. with a welcome poem presented by a ten years young boy Farhad, the son of Persis and Mahernosh Choksey, from California. the Poem was in **Gujerati**. Farhad’s presentation was excellent. This was followed by a key note and welcome address by K. N. Dastoor. Hundred years back, Baheramshah Shroff opened the treasure chest of Ilm-e-Khshnoom in Bag-e-Parsaa Adran Saheb of Surat. Ilm-e-Khshnoom is the mystical science and art revealed in Zarthoshti Din. It was taught to Baheramshahji by the Saheb-Delaan residing in a sacred orbital region surrounding the Mount Daemavand in Iran. The centenary celebrations were aimed to remind and awaken the Community about the spiritual and mystical treasure of Khshnoom.

K.N.D. introduced the Chief Guest of the day, Dasturji Dr. Peshotan Hormazdiyar Mirza of Iranshah at Udwada, and his achievements. Dasturji spoke on “**Tracing the Roots of the Parsis**”. He traced our history from the remote ancient times to Kyani, Hakhamanian, Sassan Dynasties and the present day.

After lunch on 30-12-06, Janab Sadeqzade, a professional narrator of Firdausi’s Shahnameh, presented the story of Seven Hafteh Khan of Rustom, reciting the couplets from Shahnameh in a wonderfully powered voice and with an amazing fervour. With a thin stick in his hand, he enlivened Pahalvan Rustom’s adventures. It was a thrilling experience to see him acting as Rustom and praying to Davar-e-Daadgar Daadaar fallen on his knees and lifting his head to the sky with spread out arms. Silloo Mehta translated the running theme.

The next speaker Smt. Mahrookh Adajania of Surat and Jalgaon spoke on **“Maraā Jivan par Khshnoomni Asar” (The influence of Khshnoom on my life)**. She narrated her experiences in a voice thrilling with emotion and devotion.

This was followed by K. N. Dastoor's lecture on **“Life itself is Religion.”** He emphasised that every moment of life should be founded on the teachings and 'tarikats' of the Din.

In the evening, the Religious and Cultural Exhibition was inaugurated by Mme Rati Nadir Godrej, the daughter of Alamai and the late Burjorji Vaghaiwalla from California. It is difficult to describe in words the religious beauty and fervour of each Exhibit. There were eye-catching models, archetypal displays, designs, moulds, configurations, facsimile, miniatures, epitomes, imageries, and writings, demonstrating the doctrines, teachings, tenets, traditions, history, and culture of the Zarthoshti Din as revealed and elaborated by Ilm-e-Khshnoom. Here were the models showing Asho Zarathushtra's infancy; 16 Fires of Atash Baheram; 16 Chakhras of the human personality; 21 Nasks, each named by one word of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer; historical models of Hakhaa manian times; and a host of other things, so artistically designed and displayed that visitors were thrilled to the core. They gazed at each of the models and things standing aghast for minutes. A DVD is being made for the exhibition. The exhibition was open all the three days. Mrs. Alamai Vaghaiwalla had financially sponsored the exhibition. We have no words to thank her.

At 7 p.m. on 30-12-06 there was a variety programme by Pervez Mehta and his group, consisting of humorous skits, and Parsi songs.

On 31-12-2006 Ervad Dr. Ramyar Karanjia, Principal Dadar Athornan Madressa was the chief guest. KND while introducing him described his brilliant career in Avesta studies. He spoke on Firdosi and his Shahnameh and

created a vivid verbal picture of the Iranian history and how Firdosi's Shahnameh came near to Avesta scriptures.

At 12.30 p.m. Dr. Homai Kasad from San Francisco, spoke on **“Sudreh Kushti Our Sacred Alaats”**, with the help of computerised slides, showing the constitution, significance and effects of Sudreh as a sacred garment and Kushti as a sacred girdle. It was a treat to listen to a Doctor, trained in neuroscience, speaking on Zarthoshti 'Alaats'.

At 4 p.m. on 31-12-06 Adi Doctor spoke on **“The fall of the Sasanian Empire and the Parsi Community today.”** a warning from the past, relevant at present, for the future of us, the Parsis.

K. N. Dastoor spoke on **“Asho Zarathushtra, the Yazata”**, quoting evidences from the Holy Scriptures, for the theme.

At 7 p.m. on 31-12-06, the students of the Mancherji Joshi Dharma-gnyan class presented a skit and Shahnameh performances.

This was followed by a play: **“Traveller at Cross Roads.”** where a Parsi truth-seeker meets an atheist, a worldly wise man, a scientist, a mobed, a Hindu Saint and finally Baheramshah Shroff who shows him the Path of Khshnoom.

The Shahnameh Narrator Janaab Sadekzadeh presented a narration from Firdosi, on Rustom's Adventures, in his unique style.

Finally Marzban Mehta and his group presented a musical programme of Parsi songs.

The third and the last day, 1-1-2007, was presided by Dasturji Meherjirana of Navsari. K. N. Dastoor while introducing him stated that he was an ardent student of Khshnoom and is the author of Dictionary of the technical words occurring in Ilm-e-Khshnoom. Dastoorji Meherjirana spoke on the divinity of Khshnoom and the seven spiritual foundations of the Din.

Sam Billimoria of California spoke on

“Cyrus, the great.” The most interesting and useful information he gave was that Cyrus is referred to not only in Old Testament but also in the Holy Quran.

In the post lunch period, Smt Armai Dhalla, the daughter of the late Dr Minochaher Karkhanawalla, spoke on **“Faith in Dokhmenashini”**, presenting excellent Scientific and religious materials and convincing arguments in support of the system. She was followed by Smt. Aban Sethna, ex-Professor in Sir J. J. School of Arts, whose subject was **“Power of Manthravani”** She presented in clear and simple words, the truths about Mantra taught in our Din and elaborated by Ilm-e-Khshnoom.

K. N. Dastoor then spoke on different sets of 21 Nasks, as revealed by Khshnoom and the mystical sources of our present day Manthra Prayers.

Sadeq Zadeh appeared third time. He presented some glimpses of the battle between Rustom and Asfandiyar.

The festival ended with a musical programme and a small play : “Asho Zarathushtra Speaks” by Parvez and Marzban Mehta and their group.

There was a contributory dinner, catered by Tanaz Godiwalla at a very concessional rate. Our profuse thanks to her.