

THE PARSEE VOICE

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NO WORLD BODY, PLEASE!

We Have Our *Paak* Iranshah!

BPP/FPZAI To Note, Please

(Continued from Issue I. 9)

New Year
Greetings to
All Our Readers
& Well Wishers!

In the last few months, we have been asking two basic questions, to all concerned, regarding the formation of a World Body of "Zoroastrians": (1) Where is the need for such a body? (2) How and why have we Parsee/Irani Zoroastrians survived and prospered for more than 1200 years?

In a population of crores of Hindus and Muslims, a miniscule minority has stamped its indelible imprint on the whole nation – nay, the whole world! Any common-sensed person would ask: how did this come about?

The True Source Of Our Strength And Prosperity

For the first time, perhaps, *The Parsee Voice* delves into the real reason for our unique survival. **It is spiritual.**

Our ancestors from Iran, led by **Mubedan Mubed**, Nairyosangh Dhaval, came to India sometime in the late 8th or 9th century. The emigration from Iran was planned and well meditated. The leader and some of his helper-mobeds, were men of very high spiritual stature. They knew that after Iran, only in India would the Zoroastrian religion and its followers, the Parsees, would survive.

Thus, the avowed purpose of this unique, peculiar Diaspora, was the protection of the religion and the preservation of the race.

Mubed Nairyosangh and his exalted men, described themselves as "**Yazdan** worshippers" and as those who feared the "**Darwandan**" (demon worshippers). As the *Qissa-e-Sanjan* puts it : "The Mubed thus all rites and customs elucidated, and one by one each article of faith elaborated." Soon after the Rajput King gave them asylum, Nairyosangh's entourage went to the Raja and requested for "three *farsangs* of clear land, so that "we may do our faith's duty splendidly."

Modern Parsees should seriously ponder the following lines from the **Qissah...**

**"For three *farsangs* the land must cleared be,
So that we may do our faith's duty splendidly.
Never should there trespass any alien,
Let it be only for the wise Bahdenian.
If no Juddeen ever trespass there,
Propitious shall be the sacred fire.
Should but even one alien voice heard be,
This work of faith shall lose its sanctity.**

Royal approval, the Raja gave them.
'Go', said he, 'and act with full freedom!'

**"Removed he three farsangs away every Juddeen
So that none remained there but the Behdeen."**

These lines should be hammered into the heads of all those, today, who, **inspite of ideal conditions and environment around them, talk glibly of '*Kharaab laage*'**, or even worse, those who consider it *infra-dig* to tell non-Parsees to keep out of our religious functions!

Just imagine! People, no doubt exalted souls, who were total strangers to the Rajput Raja and who were seeking refuge, telling him in no uncertain terms that we don't want any non-Zoroastrians in the vicinity! And today's Parsee sissies tell us that we insult our non-Zoroastrian friends if we don't allow them to see the face of a departed Zoroastrian or make them sit outside when a ceremony is going on! How the mighty have fallen!

Well, the long and short of it is that our Holy Iranshah was consecrated and enthroned with the strictest of purity. **The spiritual power and strength of Iranshah devolves from two factors:** (i) all the elaborate procedures, involving purification and consecration of the different fires were implemented with the strictest discipline; (ii) the fire of lightning was specially drawn with the help of our **Manthra** (prayers)

and the incantation of **Nirangs**, which the lofty souls knew then.

What many of us are not aware of is that *Mubedan Mubed* Nairyosangh Dhaval, the *Ashavan*, an extremely pious, and holy **Athornan**, raised the *Pav Mahal* on the base of Iranshah. This is not the place to go into the nitty-gritty of the *Pav Mahal*. Suffice to state that *Pav Mahal* literally means, "a consecrated palace." It is an allegorical institution. A spiritual Power-House from which, emanate divine currents. All our other *Atash Behrams* and *Agiaries* are connected to this one and only **Pav Mahal** in the whole, wide physical world.

It is this *Pav Mahal* that has been the protector and sustainer of our religion and the preserver of our race for more than 1200 years! It is because of this *Pav Mahal* and Iranshah that Parsee Zoroastrians of India in general, and Western India, in particular, have produced world-renowned industrialists, philanthropists, intellectuals, and top-class professionals, who have been the envy of all nations and communities!

The words "Western India" need to be emphasised, because, modern Parsees, if they have to survive and prosper, must live within the "Sphere of Influence" of *Pak Iranshah*, as their forefathers did. Those who go out of this periphery and settle abroad, cannot survive as a separate community, with a distinct identity. In just about a hundred years, they

would be merged with the local population. Our Diaspora, nearly 1300 years ago, was unique and purposeful. Each one of us owes it to our ancestors to remain faithful to and perform our duties as per the unwritten trust deed executed by them. Any deviation, and we would be guilty of committing a breach of trust! This is exactly what has been happening for more than a hundred years now!

World Body – No Way!

So, where is the need for a World Body for the Parsees of India – a brainchild of Parsee/Irani Zoroastrians settled abroad, who see their religious citadel crumbling right before their eyes and who have no survival straw to cling to?!

Let every Parsee of India vow to strengthen the **Pav Mahal** and the divine circuits and currents flowing from Holy Iranshah, till the good times come! No man-made institution anywhere in the world is ever fit to hold a candle to the powerful spiritual institution, set up by **Mubedan Mubad**, Nairyosangh Dhaval. **That is the only true Umbrella Body** we know of. The earlier the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet realise this Truth and decide to give a resounding "No" to any synthetic body, the better for our community and religion!

The Parsee Voice assures its readers that it will leave no stone unturned to achieve this goal!

You're Telling Us!

'Hamazor' With...?

Dear Sir,

Thank you for making the community aware of crucial issues pertaining to our religion and its survival. Those BPP trustees who are also WZO officials need to be exposed for intentionally misinforming the community when specific questions are asked.

During the recent election campaign, Mr. Tamboly assured the voters that WZO has nothing to do with Ali Akbar Jafarey and it does not accept any conversion activities of the Zarathushtrian Assembly (ZA) headed by Jafarey. He categorically stated that Mr. Jafarey is not even a member of the WZO!

The facts are different from the information given by Mr. Tamboly to his voters. The official publication of WZO, *Hamazor*, issue 3 of 2003, "UNESCO Celebrates 3000 years of Zoroastrian Culture", distributed soon after Mr. Tamboly's re-election, includes articles from "ratu" Jafarey himself as well as from the Mexican and Brazilian converts of the so-called Zarathushtrian Assembly.

"*Hamazor*" carries an article written by Dr. Jose Luis Abreu, a recent Mexican convert who is now a "Zarthushti by choice" (p. 20-22). With Dr. Abreu's photograph in the inset, it is stated that he is "attracted and initiated into the Zoroastrian religion

and is the current director of Latin America Spenta University Foundation and a member of the California based Zarathushtrian Assembly". Spenta University Foundation is a product of the ZA. In Latin America, mass conversions through fake "navjotes" are being carried on, all supported and acknowledged by WZO and BPP trustees who are also WZO officials. Why else would *Hamazor* carry, promote and support such articles, issues and the people behind these? But, according to Mr. Tamboly, WZO does not have anything to do with the ZA, Ali Akbar Jafarey or the new converts, the so-called "Zarthushtis by choice"! Is Mr. Tamboly trying to make us believe that WZO's official publication is not the voice of WZO?

Another article, "Looking Forward to the Future", is written by an Iranian Muslim convert, Mr. Arman Ariane (p.22-23). He attended the FEZANA 2001 AGM in Los Angeles wherein he advised all Parsi-Zarthushtis to alter our religion the way it is followed by the converts of the ZA. Is this the "Future" the BPP/WZO will herald for us? Through the ZA and Spenta University Foundation, Jafarey has taken it upon himself to alter our scriptures, rituals and traditions as is perceived to be convenient. Threat of physical violence by converts of the ZA has also taken place on the networks demanding the true Parsi-Zarthushtis accept these converts as "Zarthushtis". It is the

(continued on page 4)

Lessons To Be Drawn From A Century Gone By... The Hypocrisy Of Parsees Married Outside

(Continued from last Issue)

In our issue I.10, reference was made to various Samast Anjuman Meetings, called by the BPP, and the resolutions passed thereat, condemning inter-faith marriages by both, Parsee men and women and rejecting the acceptance of their progenies, into the fold.

One such Samast Anjuman Meeting was called way back on 2nd February, 1919, which passed six resolutions in Gujarati, expressing disgust at Parsee women "marrying" non-Parsees. According to resolution No.2, "any Parsee woman/girl who 'marries' a non-Parsee in any manner, and who either or not claims to profess the Zoroastrian religion, goes out of her ancestral Parsee community, and her children belong to the seed of her husband, according to **the constitution of the Parsee community and its long-standing traditions**. She or her children have no right to the religious or community funds and properties of all kinds."

The six resolutions were signed by the BPP trustees of those days, stalwarts in their own way, including Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy, Cowasji Jehangir, Muncherji Khareghat, Hormasji Wadia, etc.

In resolution No.2, as mentioned above, the words that attract special attention, or raise eyebrows, depending on which side you are on, are, "according to the constitution of the Parsee community..." This is the same unwritten constitution referred to in our lead article in this issue.

It must be acknowledged in retrospect that such Samast Anjuman Meetings have not proved to be a deterrent to wayward Parsee men and women, doing things their own way.

Particularly, after the Special Marriage Act of 1954, the *Juddeen*, 'unions' increased tremendously. The BPP kept on eliciting opinions from barristers and legal luminaries, like Jamshed Kanga, Vicaji Taraporewala, Thomas Strangman, Nussurwanji Engineer, etc. from time to time. But, like the Samast Anjuman Meetings' resolutions, these were, at best, opinions.

Parsee Personal Law

What, however, was overlooked by those who mattered, namely the trustees of the BPP and those of Agiaries and Atash Behrams, as well as the *Panthakies*, was the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, which has passed through various amendments, since it was first enacted in 1865.

According to this Personal Law of the Parsees, a marriage to be valid must fulfil three conditions: it should be between Mazdayasni Zoroastrians, the Ashirwad ceremony has to be performed and such a ceremony should be performed by

properly ordained priests. Our Personal Law does not recognise any other marriage except between Parsees.

As against that, there is the secular law, in the form of the Special Marriage Act, 1954, according to which both the spouses can practise their individual religion.

Again here, battlelines were drawn between the orthodox and the heterodox Parsees, as to whether Parsee women marrying outside and their children, could enter the *Agiaries*, *Atash Behrams* and, after their death, *Dakhmas*.

Those against such women and their children making use of our consecrated religious institutions, did not satisfactorily and forcefully push the argument about that traditional, unwritten constitution of the community, and also the hard fact that the settlers of such institutions never intended such women to make use of their institutions. The women were free to do what they liked in their homes. They could have even built their own Fire Temples!

Unfortunately, the various trustees and Parsee priests just did not show any "application", whatsoever! The result was a fillip to such non-Zarthoshti liaisons.

The Fib About The 'Law Of The Land'

Things came to such a head, that in 1966, pressure was brought on the BPP trustees, to elicit written opinions from High Priests and religious scholars about the position of Parsee women married outside and their children. 23 replies to the BPP Questionnaire were received. **20 of them categorically asserted, that the women as well as their progenies have no right to use the consecrated religious institutions**. The remaining three, proffered the pet but erroneous belief about the 'Law of the Land'.

According to them and a few others, the "Law of the Land", by which they meant the Special Marriage Act, precluded them from taking action against these women and their children.

The BPP trustees never published the opinions of these 23 Dasturs and scholars.

The real climax came in 1990, when Roxan Shah passed away at a young age. Dr. Aspi Golwala, the then Chairman of the BPP, refused her the last rites at Doongerwadi.

Before continuing with the narration in our next issue, we'd like to leave readers with this pertinent question: If Parsee women flout one of the basic premises of the Zoroastrian religion – of preserving the **Zarthoshti** lineage and **Khoreh** – isn't it hypocritical for them to aver that, "we still profess the religion"?

(To Be Continued)

ગુજરાતની નાની/મોટી અંજુમનોને ખાસ વિનંતી

અમારી જાણ મુજબ, ફેડરેશન ઑફ પારસી જરથોશ્તી અંજુમ નજ ઑફ ઈન્ડિયા નાં આશરે ૭૦ સભાસદો છે, યાને લગભગ ૭૦ અંજુમનો આ ફેડરેશનનાં સભ્યો છે. તેમાંથી આશરે ૫૦% અંજુમનો ગુજરાત રાજ્યમાં છે.

તો આવી નાની મોટી ગુજરાતની અંજુમનો, અને ખાસ કરીને, અમદાવાદ, સુરત, વડોદરા, નારગોળ વિ. ની અંજુમનોનાં મુતવહીઓને અમો અરજ કર્યે છીએ, કે તમો દરેક ફેડરેશનની સભામાં તમારો આવાજ ઊઠાવો, અને પેલી વિશ્વ જરથોશ્તી સંસ્થા (World Body) જેવી સૂચનાઓ થાય, ત્યારે તેનો ખુલ્લો સામનો કરો.

અમો આટલું લખવા માટે એટલાથી પ્રેરાયા છીએ કે મળતી ખબર મુજબ, મોટે ભાગની અંજુમનોનાં સભ્યો ફક્ત ડોકાંજ હલાવે છે,

અને હિંમતભર્યો સામનો કરતાં અચકાય છે! છેલ્લી બારડોલીની સભામાં પણ આવીજ વર્તણુક અપનાવવામાં આવી હતી.

આની સામે એવી પણ ફરિયાદ થાય છે કે ફેડરેશનનો તમામ કારોબાર અંગ્રેજીમાંજ થાય છે, જે થોડાક સભ્યો બરાબર સમજીને તેનો પ્રત્યાધાત યા ઉત્તર રજુ કરી શકતા નથી.

આનાં સંદર્ભમાં ભારપૂર્વક જાગ્રાવવાનું કે જેઓને ગુજરાતી ભાષામાં રજુઆત કરવી હોય, તો તેઓ વિના સંકોચ તેમ કરી શકે છે, કારણકે આ બધા અંગ્રેજીમાં બોલનારાઓ ગુજરાતી બરાબર સમજી શકે છે. માટે કાંઈ પણ સંકોચ વગર ગુજરાતની અંજુમનોએ આવી સભાઓમાં આગળ પડતો ભાગ ભજવી, પોતાની ફરજ જરૂર બજાવવી જોઈએ!

You're Telling Us! *(continued from page 2)*

stated aim of the ZA to convert 50,000 Irani Muslims in California alone to our religion irrespective of the threat such activities pose to Parsi-Zarthushtis living in Iran and in other Islamic states.

On pp. 88-89, another convert of Brazilian origin, Onaldo Alves Pereira, writes about the activities of the Spenta group and the ZA in different cities of Brazil where mass "conversions" of Brazilians into our religion are carried on. Every Parsee-Zarthushti should read this article in order to know what the "missionary" activities of Jafarey are! The poor peasants from these Latin countries are actually "bought" by bribes to convert into our religion similar to the activities of the Christian Missionaries in India and elsewhere! And, all this is done in the name of "Asha"!

"Ratu" Jafarey's article is printed on pp. 41-42 under the title, "The Preacher Supreme". If WZO truly refers to Jafarey as the "Supreme Preacher", why does Mr. D. K. Tamboly affirm with a straight face to his voters that WZO has nothing to do with Jafarey, ZA or Spenta University Foundation? When asked about the category in WZO's membership form, "Zarthushtis by choice", Mr. Tamboly denied it referred to any converts. Yet, a heretic convert is promoted and glorified as the "Supreme Preacher"! Can we not request Mr. Tamboly to please give some truthful answers to our questions? Mr. Jafarey may not be a formal member of the WZO, but surely, non-members would not be given such a prominent exposure in WZO's special issue of its official publication? WZO's total support of Jafarey, ZA,

Spenta and the conversion activities is obvious! Will our community still sit idly by and let this imposter Jafarey, with help from WZO and other renegades, destroy our religious community? I am sure The Parsee Voice will expose the shenanigans of the BPP and the WZO.

Under the title, "Zoroastrian Nations in the 21st Century", pp. 68-69, a global map identifies the "new emerging regions" that include Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Uganda, and other parts of the globe where Ali Jafarey's conversion activities are taking place. What pathetic excuses will Mr. Tamboly give now to explain this map of the "Zoroastrian" nations? We are all ready to lend him our ears but how many gullible ears will he find this time?

Do we need any proof to decide for ourselves as to what the true intentions of the BPP are? Three of its trustees are now WZO officials and the BPP is being dictated not by its original mandate as a "Trust" to serve the Parsi Zarthushti community and its religious institutions but it has now taken unto itself the new role of a "reformer" organization that is truly cosmopolitan, representing the Mexicans, Brazilians and all the "Zarthushtis by choice", as members of the World Zarthushti Community (Organization)! The previous trustees always acted within their mandate and took actions against renegades.

Charity is a virtue but not when WZO uses it to subvert our religion. While it may be desirable to set up a "World Body", its aim has to safeguard our religion, identity and sacred institutions. Sadly, this is not so! The BPP stands condemned!

Pervin J. Mistry

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