

THE PARSEE VOICE

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Beware, The Bardoli Bogeys !

ATTENTION ALL PUNCHAYETS AND ANJUMANS !

In our last issue (Vol. I. 6), we had mentioned the religious subjects which will be discussed at the Bardoli meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI), on the 29th and 30th November, 2003. Of these, how any Adoption of Children law among the Parsees was totally impractical and untenable, was pointed out in detail in that issue. **Parsees sought total exemption from the Government of India in 1982 and were granted the same. So, there is no justification whatsoever, for the re-opening of the issue!**

The other three topics for "debate" are :

- (i) "the unification" of the three calendars followed at present;
- (ii) the alleged "gender bias" against Parsee women `married' outside the community;
- (iii) the institution of Khandhias and Nassesalars .

(i) THE 3 CALENDARS

On this topic, the Chief Executive of the BPP states *inter alia* : "The original Persian calendar, evolved by King Jamshed was the one which coincided with the sun entering the first constellation of Aries, on the 21st March.

"The unification of the calendar has been debated in our Community, for close to 70-80 years. It is high time the Community took a conscious decision to unify the three calendars, and start

the first day of the new calendar with Jamshedi Navroze (21st March)."

If it were that easy, the late Mr. K.R. Cama would have done it a hundred years ago! It's not a question of asking the Union Press, `From next year, will you please stop printing the Shahenshahi/Kadmi calendars, and, instead, publish only that calendar which has *Roj Hormazd, Mah Fravardin* on the 21st March, so that our Mr. B.T. Dastur can gleefully hang it on the wall? (*Ekaj fatkaamaan, kaam purun!*)

The three Zoroastrian calendars have not only their separate history, which we need not go into at this stage, **but the CEO's brainchild would radically upset the ritualistic applecart of the Parsees!**

A very brief idea of what the Zoroastrian calendars do in Nature is given here.

In Nature, just as *Yazads, Ameshaspands* and other Divine Beings co-work with Lord Ahura Mazda, according to the Divine Law of *Asha*, and carry out their functions in the various dimensions of Nature, in the same manner, Zoroastrian almanacs have been prepared.

The Shahenshahi/Kadmi calendars are known as the *Hushmordi Panchang*. The year is divided into 365 days. This calendar runs parallel with the **Vahizaki (Fasli)** calendar for three years. It is in the fourth year (leap year) that a day is

added in the *Vahizaki* calendar. But, it's not like the Gregorian calendar that an extra day is mechanically added at the end of February!

For our purpose, we shall consider only two points : (a) why a **Fasli** calendar simply cannot be put into practise today and (b) why the two traditional calendars are in order for the present times.

Zoroastrian *riwaji* (traditional) calendars have everything to do with day-to-day Zoroastrian rituals, including the *bui* ceremony of the *Atash Padshahs*, the inner liturgical ceremonies (the *Pav Mahal* ceremonies, like the *Yasna*, *Vendidad*, *Nirang Din*, etc.) and the other *Hushmordi ceremonies like Afringan, Farokshi, Stum, etc.*

The traditional *Shahenshahi* and *Kadmi* calendars and rituals have come down to us as RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS, which cannot be changed willy-nilly or at the whims of any namby pamby person. **They are connected with the *Pav Mahal* (an invisible spiritual institution containing magnetic circuits, the *Vispe Ratu* (23 in number), i.e. that many Yazatic forces, the *Dasturi*, the *Bareshnum*, etc.**

To illustrate, the latest *Pav Mahal* (lit. the ceremonially pure palace) was raised by the **Dasturan Dastur**, Neryosangh Dhaval, who brought us to India from Iran, on the base of Holy Iranshah! **This is the only *Pav Mahal* existing in the physical world today!** All the *alats* (the consecrated implements or requisites), including the *Atash Padshahs*, the *Yaozdathregars* (the priests who perform the inner liturgical ceremonies) derive their spiritual strength and power from this specially created *Pav Mahal*.

Any tinkering with the *Roj-Mah* (day and month) over which a particular *Ameshaspand* or *Yazad* presides, and which a priest recites while conducting his rituals, creates a violent disorder in Nature, throws out of gear the *Bareshnum* ceremony through which the priest has passed and has a chain reaction that ultimately affects

the very existence of the *Mazdayasni Zarthoshti* religion and its followers, the Parsee community of India!!

The traditional *Pav Mahal* of India, on which are based the *Shahenshahi* and *Kadmi* calendars should be left strictly alone and no Anjuman or Panchayet has any power to potter around with it! It is a sign of the times we live, that a "Dastur" and that too, with a *Yazad's* name, has to be reminded of this stark fact!!

(ii) PARSEE WOMEN MARRIED OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY

In our future issues, we shall take up this whole matter in its entirety, including Parsee men marrying outside, but for the present, we'll confine ourselves to that fancy, latter-day expression "gender bias"!!

The question of questions, that needs to be asked again and again: **What is a legitimate, valid marriage for a Zoroastrian?** The answer is, (a) both the spouses should be *Mazdayasni Zarthoshtis*; (b) they should undergo the *Nahan* and the *Ashirwad* ceremonies; and (c) such ceremonies should be performed by lawfully ordained priests.

Whether a Parsee Zoroastrian woman marrying outside the community continues to remain a Parsee Zoroastrian is purely a question of the Zoroastrian religion and not that of any civil law. The Zoroastrian religion does not recognise any marriage performed under a civil law, where marriage is treated as a mere contract and not a sacrament.

If the Special Marriage Act 1954, permits the woman undergoing a contractual marriage to practise her religion, that's her **personal** matter. She can do what she likes in her own home. But she has no business to foist and impose herself on the consecrated religious institutions and on those who do not consider her to be a Zoroastrian any more!

And yet, we have name-droppers, the likes of B.T. Dastur, who try to bamboozle the lay Parsee, by mentioning what Sam Bharucha or Soli Sorabjee may have opined!

Who is the BPP or the Federation or, for that matter, any Anjuman or Panchayet, to discuss and debate purely religious matters? What locus standi do they have in taking up these matters?

(iii) THE INSTITUTION OF KHANDHIAS AND NASSESALARS

A long note on this topic has been written by the CEO of the BPP, in the agenda prepared for the Bardoli Federation meeting. Some extracts : "In major urban concentrations, these Institutions developed, and with it came an unwritten isolation/ostracism for them! Fortunately for us, their avocation did not convert itself into a caste, as in the rest of India. The wise men of our society saw to it that we did not metamorphose into a caste-ridden society." [O Tempora!]

"These two categories of our employees do not approach us for an educational help. We suspect that they apply to various Parsi Trusts and get funded beyond what is required for their child's/children's education. Through Trustee, Mr. D.K. Tamboly's/Ms. Mithoo Jesia's efforts there is a voluntary `corps' of pall-bearers who can rise to the occasion, in the event of a crisis. We were close to such a situation, recently. It got resolved, fortunately."

"But to our knowledge, only we have this formalized system of pall-bearers, who, somehow, are kept at a social distance."

"The time is approaching when this reservoir of barely-educated men from South and Central Gujarat will dry up, for the same reason – better educated boys will not take to these two avocations."

If only the present lot of BPP trustees and their CEO know who a *Nassesalar* was, they wouldn't have made such ludicrous statements and talked of "caste" system, ostracisation and volunteers.

Briefly, a *Nassesalar* is one who is the leader (*salar*) over *nasa* or putridity. If such a person observes strictly the basic ritual purity, he can override and conquer the putridities emanating from the corpse!

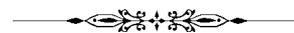
As a chief executive of the BPP, Mr. Dastur should realise that volunteers can help only in an emergency, not when, on an average, there are three dead bodies per day, to be consigned to the *Dakhma*!

Some of you may remember the public meeting at the Patkar Hall in December 2001, when two speakers read out from a memo, put up by the same B.T. Dastur, stating that in the next ten years or so, the institution of *Khandhias* and *Nassesalars* should be gradually wound up. Marginal remarks made by some of the trustees, particularly the one by that "sitting trustee", who continues to sit for another seven years, namely, "a brilliant idea...", etc. point to only one thing:

Since the present lot of BPP trustees couldn't succeed in giving a `bungli' or a prayer hall to the crematorium crazies two years ago, what better and quicker way to shut down the *Dakhmas*, than to throw up their hands and say, "Look, these young fellas want to attend colleges and sit before computers, rather than do the `Sachkar' and enter the *Dakhmas*!!

Many right-thinking Parsees wonder, why these four purely religious subjects, which are outside the pale of any Anjuman or Panchayet. The answer is obvious: the preparation for the soon-to-be formed World Body of "Zoroastrians", which every faithful Parsee should oppose tooth and nail!

Our next issue will be devoted to this dangerous "World Body" and its ramifications. At present, notwithstanding what the Chairman of the BPP, Mr. Minoo Shroff, has to say about it, rest assured it will be absolutely suicidal for the Parsee community of India!!



WORLD BODY OF ZOROASTRIANS – ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

The Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly dated 9th November 2003 carried a clarification by Mr. M.R. Shroff, the Chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, on certain aspects of the proposed World Body of Zoroastrians (WB).

While it is a fact that only the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) is slated to become a member of the proposed WB, the BPP, by virtue of being the major constituent of FPZAI, will automatically come under the overall purview of the WB.

Mr. Shroff has himself said that there will be an apex body, International Zoroastrian Organisation (IZO), whose Board will comprise eminent senior representatives from both branches of the WB viz. WZO (Individuals) and WZO (Federations). If one has closely read the membership clause of both these constituents of the proposed WB, it is quite obvious that even pseudo-Zoroastrians (not born Zoroastrians) will gain membership status. Thus, it is technically possible for one of these pseudo-Zoroastrians to find their way on the Board of IZO. One fails to understand how such a person will not be able to influence the functioning of the two constituents, as claimed by the Chairman. And that is where the root of the problem lies.

We have said this before in our communication to the BPP and reiterate that we strongly object to this attempt to equate and put on par the over-1200 years old Anjuman of Parsees of India with the foreign persons who claim to profess(?) the Zoroastrian religion! Our migration (from Iran to India) was an intentional, planned one and was for the avowed purpose of preserving our religion and race! It is absurd to put that Anjuman, which has preserved its separate identity, on the same level with people who are intent on making a backdoor entry into our age-old religion by striking at the very roots of our canon law and religious customs and practices!

Not only is this religious hara-kiri but an insult to our noble ancestors who sacrificed themselves in order that their future generations, who are the rightful heirs, may inherit the rich religious and cultural heritage.

We hope that wisdom will prevail and we stop short of going over the precipice.

H.M. Mistry

Lest You Forget... Your Date With Us!

Please do make it a point to attend the very important Awareness Meeting, which will have a vital bearing on the future of our religion and community.

Venue : Framjee Cawasjee Institute, Opp. Metro Cinema, Dhobi Talao, Mumbai.

Date : Friday, 21st November, 2003

Time : 6.15 p.m.

Speakers include : Adi F. Doctor, Ervad Dr. Rooyintan Peer, Khojeste P. Mistree.

Dastur Dr. Kaikhushroo M. Jamaspasa has kindly agreed to be the Chief Guest.

એક દરગુજર

જગ્યાની તંગાશને લીધે આ અંકમાં અમો ગુજરાતી વિભાગ રજુ કરી શક્યા નથી, તે બદલ વાંચકોની દરગુજર ચાહિએ છીએ. આવતા અંકમાં, ખાસ લેખ, “આ વિશ્વ સંસ્થાની જરૂર શું છે” વાંચવાનું ચૂકશો નહિ. - તંત્રી

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