

Editorial –

**PRESENT DAY KRIYA-KAAM, A
CONSPIRACY OF MOBEDS AND DASTURS**

Is There a Remedy?

One of the foundations of the Parsi life is Kriya kaam, loosely called rituals or ceremonies. In spite of the two onslaughts, one from the material civilization and the other from the so called scholarly and critical studies, both gushing from the west, the Parsis have to this day preserved their faith in Kriyakam. Our Atesh Beherams, Adrans and Agiaris spread out all over India are supposed to be the holy places for the performance of the ceremonies ordained in our Daena. We have inherent faith in them. We believe that they are not just symbolic external rituals, (as some high brows pompously proclaim), but they generate certain unseen spiritual effects which help our dear departed souls in their journey in the next world.

It has been observed that those who carried on life-long campaigns against Kriyakam, had, on the death of their dearest ones, rushed to have the ceremonies performed. Inquiries regarding Kriyakam are on an increase. Such is our faith.

We rely on our Mobeds and Dasturs for the due and proper performance of the ceremonies. **But are they faithful to us and our dependence on them?**

Performance of religious ceremonies is a delicate spiritual operation requiring great precision and skill. Kriyas are communications to the spiritual world. **An acute sense of responsibility and utmost sincerity are called for on the part of the Mobed.** These are required not only when he is actually performing the ceremonies on the carpet, or in the Yazashney Gah, the sacred place secluded for higher ceremonies, but also in his personal day to day life. He is required to observe the ordained rules of Ashoi. He is required to cultivate a temperament to the effect that his is a spiritual job involving spiritual responsibility towards the Behdins the departed Ruvan, Asho Zarathushtra and the Daena. **BUT ARE THESE IN VOGUE TODAY?**

Ceremonies are mainly of two grades: **lower, called “Hoshmordi”**, and **higher, called “Pav-Mahal”**. The former consists of Afringan, Farokshi, Stoom. They can be performed by any Mobed, who has passed through the Navar ceremony. The higher Pav Mahal ceremonies are Baj, Yazashney, Vendidad, Nirangdin. Here the Mobeds are required (i) to have undergone proper Navar and Maratab ceremonies and (ii) to have taken Bareshnoom a self-purifying seclusion or retreat ceremony extending to ten days.

A Pav Mahal performing Mobed is compulsorily required to be a full time professional Mobed. He cannot have any other worldly vocation. Incidentally, the Boi ceremony on Atesh Beheram Padshah Saheb can be performed only by such Pav Mahal Mobeds having their Bareshnoom alive. (Pav Mahal Mobed Sahebs of Udwada are required to undergo a test called Samel in addition to Navar and Maratab).

Now the question again: Have our Mobeds of today got the aforesaid qualifications, requisites and temperament?

The pathetic answer is: most of them have not. As a polite variation, we can say, a very few of them have.

There is a grim conspiracy of Mobeds and their supposed-to-be-chiefs, the Dasturs, going on against the Behdins.

This is no exaggeration, but a statement of fact. Here are the tests.

Taking first the lower-grade ceremonies, the Afringan ceremony should take a minimum of forty five minutes. It may take more, if the names of the departed are many.

There is a Pazend Manthra composition to begin the Afringan. This is chanted aloud. The names of the departed are heard at this Pazend prelude. They are to be chanted three times. Normally, the Mobeds recite this prelude with a loud voice, and some of them, with a little musical contour to impress the Behdins. When the names are recited, the Behdins remember the departed and transmit to them the thoughts of love and respect. May you progress smoothly in your journey in the other world , should be our thought.

This prelude (called Dibaacho) should take a minimum of 10 to 15 minutes depending on the number of names. Remember, in addition to the names of your departed dear relatives three times, the names of certain divine personalities, starting from the name of Asho Zarathushtra, are also to be chanted, to invoke them to help the departed relatives in the other world.

The Dibaacho is then to be followed by minimum of three Kardeh's, each invoking a particular Yazatic Energy. Normal Yazats are Ardafravash , Daham and Sarosh. After finishing the first Kardeh, the Dibaacho is to be chanted again with a few variations, but incognito. Here also the names are to be recited three times, but can be reduced to a lesser number, confining them to the main Ruvan, for whom the ceremony is performed and his or her very near relatives. Even then 5 minutes is the minimum time for each. The Kardeh by itself is in Avesta. Each of the three Avesta Kardeh passage should take at least 5 minutes.

The concluding parts of the Afringan are three Pazend Afrins, starting with Hama Jor Baad. This should take 15 to 20 minutes.

The speeds of Mobeds do vary. Yet **it is not possible for any Mobed to finish an Afringan within less than 45 minutes.**

Farokshi consists of a combination of Stoom Kardeh and the whole of Freavardin yaashta. **No Mobed can finish Farokhshi in less than 40 minutes.**

In the result, any alleged Afringan in less than 45 minutes is a make-fool. So also, any Farokhshi, in less than 40 minutes.

What is happening today? **An Afringan is purported to be finished in 17 to 20 minutes; a Farokshi in 15 minutes. THAT IS A FRAUD ON THE BEHDINS.**

The situation regarding the Pav mahal ceremonies is worse and grimmer.

A complete Yazashney takes 2-1/2 hours. A large book of more than 225 pages covering 72 Ha's is to be chanted.

The Vendidad ceremony takes 7-1/2 hours minimum, from 12 midnight to 7.30 a.m. (local time). The full Yazashney of 72 Ha's, Visperad of 23 Kardeh's and Vendidad of 22 Pargarad's are to be chanted in a specified order. (All the three: Ha, Kardeh and Pargarad mean chapters.)

What is the situation today?

It is no exaggeration to say that **since about last more than two decades, not a single complete and proper Yazashney is performed in Mumbai.** A few conscientious Agiaris and Mobeds have stopped taking orders for Yazashney. Those who do it, brazen-facedly cut out large portions. There are some Agiaris where the Mobeds rush to the seat of on hearing the card horn of the Behdin and finish off shortly. The sacred place of Pav Mahal ceremonies are often found full of dust. The holy wells, in which the sacred water, prepared during these higher ceremonies is to be poured at the end, are often dirty and surrounded by the non-Parsi servants.

The situation regarding Vendidad is still worse. Please remember, a Vendidad should start at 12 midnight and finish at 7.30- a.m. It can be only performed by a Pav Mahal

Mobed who has his Bareshnoom intact. (There are stringent rules of keeping a Mobeds Bareshnoom intact). What is actually happening in Mumbai is that the Behdins are told to come to the Agiary at 2.30 or 3 a.m. An office going Mobed, who is not a Pav Mahal and Bareshnoom Mobed, would be seen with some Gujarati book murmuring something and the show is wound up by 5 or 5.30 a.m. Not only a mockery of the lofty ceremony but a clear fraud and deception.

Today Surat Shahenshahi Atash Baheram is the only place where full Vendidads can be made to be performed. In Navsari, there is no Mobed to perform Yazshney or Vendidad. Hardly a few Yazashneys and Vendidads are done at Udwada.

There are hollow shouts of “No Mobed, no religion.” Schemes after schemes are loaded to uplift the Mobeds, uplift here meaning to ensure good income and financial position of the Mobeds. But in spite of such boisterous schemes scattered since six decades, no Mobeds are coming out to adopt Mobedi as a vocation. **In many cases parents do not like their sons to be Mobeds. The older Mobeds are afraid to send their own sons in the Mobedi vocation for justifiable reasons. The community has lost its old atmosphere conducive to Mobedi.** The young know that there would be no job satisfaction in Mobedi, and their work would be boringly monotonous. The Mobeds are not taught about the why of the ceremonies. They are not taught how to derive spiritual satisfaction in their work. All their training is strictly confined just to how. The Dasturs with their decorative shawls and high-flown Western scholarship are unable to answer any question about the Whys of the ceremonies. **Why these nine bells in Boi ceremony? Why these tinkling bells in Yazashney? Why 8 flowers in an Afriangan? Why this peculiar shape of Maha-rooi? Why nine holes in a Yazshney saucer? Why these alats and apparatus and equipments in the ceremonies? And above all, what and why are the laws of Ashoi to be so strictly followed by a Mobed? No Dastur howsoever imposing his degree or shawl or beard may be, is unable to answer such questions.**

Few years back, an **Athravan Education Trust** was founded mainly by Income-tax Accountants, wherein the word Athravan occurred only in the title of the Trust Instrument and nowhere in its text! **Main founders were and are Behedins who were blissfully ignorant of the intricacies of the Mobedi vocation.** Some Mobeds and Dasturs have joined them but only to nod their heads. **They educate Mobeds in English and Psychology, but not in the ways and whys of Mobedi. The educators have no capacity to educate.** Those who are purported to be educated and paid (here teacher pays the student) are educated in several things all except Mobedi!

All this has resulted in the fraud on Behdins in the performance of the ceremonies 15 minutes each for Afringan and Farokshi and two hours short Vendidad. No observance of any Ashoi rules by Mobeds, no knowledge about the spiritual aspects of Kriyakam, no sense of spiritual responsibility.

Question to behdins: Is there any sense in having these counterfeit ceremonies performed?

Question to the Shawl-Vala Dasturs: Is it not your first bounden duty to take effective steps to stop this fraud, instead of sprinkling around your misplaced scholarship?

Question to the good hearted charitable wealthy: Are you doing the right thing in pouring your money into this deceitful furnace of Mobeds Upliftment without imposing any conditions to prevent the huge fraud?

Question to the world around us: Don t you think that a community, which closes its eyes towards such an enormous deceit going on in the name of religion should be on its way to extinction?

Question to the Parsi Community: Are there any remedies to prevent the fraud? Think over. Have you any suggestions?

- K. N. Dastoor

WARNING TO THE MOBEDS !

Haoma Firshteh (Angel) declares to the performing Mobeds, "My victory in this Kriya depends on your own Ashoi (i.e. your observance of the prescribed Rules of Purity and the Kriya.) If you have failed to observe the Rules, I will be distressed and unable to discharge my function, and you will, in turn, be inflicted with various kinds of punishments"

- Yazashney Ha 11

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