

**"PROMOTING AND PERPETUATING UDVADA AS
A CULTURAL AND HERITAGE CENTRE."
WOULD YOU PLEASE PAUSE AND
RECONSIDER?**

In Jam-e-Jamshed of 22-12-2002 Commissioner of Tourism, Government of Gujarat has published an announcement to the effect that the Central and the State Governments have sanctioned two grants of Rs. 97.27 lakhs and Rs. 24.32 lakhs respectively for "promoting and perpetuating Udvada as a cultural and heritage centre." This is in appreciation of the services of our community to the development of India, and our respect and good feelings to all religions other than the Parsi. The proposal suggested, as the first step, several actions like establishing a museum and cultural Centre, a Tourist Lodge cum Reception Centre and Heritage walk at Udvada, and organising a grand annual festival and tourist circuit as the places where Paak Iranshah was lodged from time to time. A core group consisting of prominent Parsis is appointed for the purpose.

We Parsis are indeed grateful to the Governments and Shri Laheri for this great gesture and the words of praise for us. We have however a couple of points, which induce us to think that the project may not be beneficial to the Community's spiritual life as connected with the holy Agni-mandir housed at Udvada and may even prove harmful to it by inviting physical, mental, psychological and spiritual pollutions in the small serene, sacred and tolerably secluded village.

It will affect the holy and spiritual atmosphere for the pilgrims and disturb their devotional frame required to be maintained there. More than that the project will greatly disturb the life of the Mobeds (priests) on whom lies the arduous and strenuous responsibility of tending, preserving and protecting the Holy Atash Padshah in accordance with the tenets, traditions and commands of the Parsi Dharma. The atmosphere of tourism, hotels and festivity will bring in serious ills and abuses of urban life, which will render it impossible for the Mobeds to observe their own personal 'tarikats' (the sacred rules of Ashoi-purity) as also the 'tarikats' for Iranshah.

Before I elaborate on this, let me first say that this Parsi Pukar is not an organ of that fanatic orthodoxy, which leaps at certain names, like a red cloth to a Spanish bull in the arena, just on their eyes falling on certain names - Dinshah Tamboly's for instance. The bull at once rushes, sweepingly ignoring all the good Mr. Tamboly has done for the Community. That is not the policy of this Magazine. It is an organ of Ilm-e-Khshnoom, the Mysticism of the Zarathoshti Dharma. Every Religion has its own mysticism, like Yoga's of the Hindu Dharma, Cabalah of the Jew Dharma, Gnostic and Rosicrucian of the Christian and the Sufism of Islam. If anyone looks to our back-issues spread over last seven years, she or he will find articles on all these Mysticisms.

What is Mysticism?

Mysticism means Truths that lie beyond the intellectual arena of non saintly people like us. Our arena is confined to three dimensions of space and one of time. The Mystic domain extends to n dimensions of space and n dimensions of time, where n is any number between zero and infinity, or perhaps below and beyond. The rationale of any Mystic doctrine or truth starts from the 3 dimensions, which our consciousness registers and absorbs. We begin with the observable world of our conscious experience, and step by step our reasoning can take us to a point which we can name the "Intellectual Barrier." Here our intellect fails and Faith begins. The electron accelerator does not make us 'see' in the innermost depth of an atom, and there the Yogi with his expanded consciousness arrives, goes in Samadhi and sees the Truth in the atom with his eyes closed!

The present proposal is to be seen not merely from the worldly point of view. The devotional, the spiritual and the mystical aspects are also to be kept in mind - more than the worldly or material.

This Holy Agni was established and consecrated more than a thousand years back in Sanjan, by a team

of highly advanced Mobeds led by Dastoor Neryosang Dehval. The then great Rajput King Jadi Rana had given all facilities to them. We are ever thankful to the King and say 'Aafrin' to his soul. There is evidence that **16594 'Jyot's** were used in consecrating Iranshah as against 1128 'Jyot's employed in the other seven 'Atash Beheram's in India.

What is Jyot?

"Doing such Jyot" consisted of the following operations:

A fire used in a specified vocation (like a gold smith, blacksmith or brick-maker etc.) is brought and first purified by a physical process.

The process is :- the fire is allowed to burn in a shallow pit; another pit is dug nearby and certain inflammable things like dry cotton, sandalwood, "lobaan" are placed in that pit. The direction as between the two pits is arranged in such a way that the blowing wind brings the fire-flame in the first pit towards and over the dry things placed in the second pit and ignites them automatically. The first-pit fire is then allowed to die down by itself and the second pit fire; is kept burning. The process is then repeated from the second pit to the third and third to fourth and so on for the **specified** number of times. [The pits are called 'Pahaadiaa's].

After the physical purification is complete, another process - this time a spiritual one by reciting holy 'Mantra's - starts. Marathon ceremonies called Yazashney and Vendidaad are performed on that fire. The duration of Yazashney is 2^{1/2} hours and of Vendidaad 7^{1/2} hours. As many Yazashney's and as many Vendidaad's are to be performed as was the number of pits (pahadiya's) used in physical purification. The particular fire is now consecrated. This is now ONE of the 16 fires of which the ultimate Atash would be made up of.

Then, the fire from another specified vocation is taken the whole process undergone, resulting in the 2nd of the 16 holy fires. After all the 16 fires are thus purified by 'Pahaadiya's and Yazashney Vendidaad ceremonies are done, the 16 consecrated Fires are amalgamated through the performance of other ceremonies, and the Holy Atash Padshah is ready for enthronement.

In the Atash Baherams of India other than Iranshah, the number of 'Jyot' was 1128; in Iranshah, **16594!** ('**Gajastak Abalish**' - by Homi Chacha, as erudite Scholar - 1936 - Pub : Bombay Parsi Puchayet - page 80, where a 1451 A.D. Gujerati manuscript is referred to.)

We Know It Works.

Now why all this? On our side of the intellectual barrier, all that we know is that the Mobeds, who did all those exertions, were highly advanced on the other side of the barrier, and through their mystical and yogic knowledge and Yasna (Yagna), they created a Divine Entity; they brought down the 'Puthra' - 'putra' - of Ahuramazda on the earth. A 'Purohit' - a Priest was enthroned on the earth; a spiritual link between God and man was established. ("Agni Illy Purohitam..... as the Rig Veda begins). We the non-saintly people have no idea about the working and how and why of all this mechanism. All that we can do is to have Faith in the Padshah Saheb and many of us have got answers to our prayers from Him, although we may be far away. That is the only 'proof' of His Divinity, we the non-saintly can have.

The Rules of Tarikat and Yasna

Those who bring down Ahura's Divine Fire Energy on earth have provided Rules for preserving and serving Him. Padshah Saheb requires particular care. He is a spiritually charged living Entity - in a polluted world of the sinful humans. The Rules and Tarikat's for His service are very exerting and exacting. The Divine Energy is required to be replenished in Him. The Sanjana Mobed Sahebs have observed the Rules since more than a thousand years.

In the aforesaid article of Mahashya Lahiri, a history of Iranshah's shifting from one place to another is given. **He was kept on Bahrot Mountain caves for 12 long years.** Imagine the plight of the then Mobeds. Everyday Buoy ceremony was to be performed 5 times i.e., in each Gah, by qualified and purified Mobeds. They had to take their own personal Bareshnoom for 9 nights; they had to do certain other Khoop-kriya. These are meant to set their spiritual battery incharge, so that when they do the Buoy ceremony in every Gah, they are themselves duly charged with the Divine Currents within them and can establish a circuit - contact

with the Holy Atash Paadshah, and through Him, with Ahura Mazda. They have also to follow certain strenuous personal Tarikats in eating, drinking and discharging all the bodily functions. Theirs is a life of purity of body, mind and soul. **How our ancestor Mobeds must have done all this for 12 long years in Bahrot mountain caves, is stunning and amazing to us.** The present day Mobeds are trying their best to follow the said Tarikats as much as possible, although there are serious obstacles to their observances due to the passing wave of evil times and the material and polluted atmosphere beyond the outskirts of the village.

It is on this ground that we are beseeching the Governments not to impose the project as it is proposed. Not only it will disturb the lives of the Mobeds in Udvada but also disturb the devotional frame of mind of the pilgrims.

Udvada is a tiny village on the coast of Gujerat. It is 10 km away from the Railway station. The road to the village is full of greeneries. As we enter village, we feel the holy vibrations of the Padshah Saheb enthroned there. The polluted air of the present day urban civilisation has yet not reached there with its usual bangs. There are no n star hotels, no factories, no machineries, no mills, no traffic noise, no polluting industries. All peace, bliss, silence of Lord's paradise! Here are drawn the orbits of Parsis unflinching devotion to the great living Entity, the spiritual Emperor. The subtle formations of their faith and love and devotion are vibrating all around. There may be some talk of fried fish or a todi bottle, but the heart is gyrated towards the Padshah. It is a serene island of devotion in the midst of an ocean of pollution.

Now, this flock consisting of lodge and museum and festivals and tourism is a direct invitation to physical and mental filth. This will import big hotels, with all their evils of liquor bars and brothels. Just have a look to not-so-far hotels in Daman, Vapi and near by. The builders and estate brokers will flock around. Properties around Iranshah will be sold out. Lies, falsehoods, frauds, bribery, corruption, pollution, defilements will be infused in the quiet spiritual atmosphere of devotion. The way to Atashbeheram will be full of impurities. The palace of Iranshah will be besieged by filth, physical as well as mental.

As to the Mobeds, they will not be able to observe certain personal 'tarikats' for their own purity and also towards Iranshah. They will not be able to observe all the rules of taking Bareshnoom and preserving Bareshnoom. It will be impossible for them even to walk between Atashbehram and their homes. Taking the sacred food, Baaj, and meals for mobeds who are in Bareshnoom will be a journey of obstacles. As it is, the Mobeds are facing tremendous difficulties in carrying out several Rules of preservation of Iranshah and personal tarikats. The project will add to their miseries.

Sanjan Will Be The Proper Place.

We write this with profound respect to the Governments. We want to bring to their notice this particular spiritual aspect. We feel that it is better to drop the project proposed at Udvada. The resources so generously offered by the Govts. can be well utilised at Sanjan, which is the arriving place of our pilgrim fathers. Sanjan is a historical place for us not only for our arrival but also for our establishing Paak Iranshah there. Further, Bahrot caves are not far off. A road from Sanjan to Bahrot mountains will provide a new place of pilgrimage and all that is proposed for Udvada can well be made applicable to Sanjan.

What about Rising Sea Waters?

Another and more urgent and **important task is to utilise those resources for saving Udvada from the onslaught of the rising waters of the sea.** It is well known that the level of the sea is rising frightfully. There is a "Save Udvada Committee" for the rising waters, but they appear to require finance. It is no use contending that the property-owners adjoining the sea should take up the matter. This is not a question of shifting burdens. It is a question of **PRESERVING AND PROTECTING Iranshah.** The presently offered Govt. grants can be well utilised towards this. It is a matter of serious concern for every Parsi on the globe. **The great Rajput King Jadi Rana most graciously allowed our ancestors to consecrate Iranshah.** Not only he gave willing permission to establish the Holy Agni, but also gave all conveniences to the Mobeds to carry out the strenuous task of performing all the requisite Kriya. **May we expect the present kings - the Center and the State to save that Agni - the monument of a Rajput King from the rushing up of the sea.** It is to be kept in mind that the proposed museum and cultural centre and the tourist lodges themselves will be subjected to the risk of the rising sea.

We also suggest the Udvada Athornan Anjuman in particular and other Athornan Anjumans be consulted in the matter. The core group announced in Jame may also consult them as well as the Parsi Behdin devotees.

Fire from the Manthric Lightning

At the end we narrate two episodes from the Divine Darbaar of Paak Iranshah. Both begin with this side of the Intellectual Barrier and then take us beyond it.

Of the 16 fires employed in germinating the Holi Agni of Iranshah, one was the fire brought down from the sky. It was brought down on a heap of wood, through the lightning flash in the sky. This was at the end of a long Yasna the Mobeds performed. When the Yasna was over, a certain specified number of Mobeds stood before a large heap of sandalwood and other woods. At a specified right moment they were ordered by their Leader to recite "Oos Moi Ujareshva..... (Gatha Yasna 33-12, 13, 14). (Atash Niyash). As the recitation proceeded, the sky darkened, and a powerful flash of lightning fell on the heap and ignited it in a golden blaze. As planned beforehand, the burning heap was taken in a shelter kept ready at hand, lest the lightning be followed by rain. The contrivance to take the fire, as soon as it was ignited, to the shelter was already made; note that it was the Manthra recitation that ignited the woods.

In the Atashbehras other than Iranshah one of the fires is from the natural lightening falling on a tree and igniting its trunk and branches.

We wonder why the vocational fires are taken in the process of Consecration. The reason is that Atash is the Lord of Karma.

Atash has 16 Karmic channels ($16 \times 9 = 12 \times 12 = 144$). Vocation is determined by Karma. I don't wish to go longer than this much, on the question.

Fire from a Burning Corpse!

Another amazing thing is that one **of the 16 fires is the fire from the burnt dead body in the burning-cemetery of Hindus – Smashan-bhoomi**. In the consecration procedure carried out at Sanjan, this fire from "Samshaan" was given 1000 Jyots i.e., 1000 Pahadias, 1000 'Yasashney's and 1000 'Vendidad's! (*Ibid-Chacha*) In other Atashbehras the number of Jyot's on Smashaan fire was 91 only.

What can be the reason for this? We have no idea what **effects** the ceremonies on Smashaan fire result in the unseen world. All that we can understand is that our Karma has brought us to Hindustan. **It is a mark of respect and also for repaying in a subtle spiritual way, our Karmic debt to this great community of Hindus. It was they who gave us refuge.** We in turn elevate the fire which burnt a Hindu corpse by purifying it and making it a part of our Holiest Fire. There are other mystical reasons but here we do not touch them.

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NEED OF HOUR: Please, please don't disturb the Spiritual serenity of Udvada. Don't oppress Iranshah. Don't disturb the Mobedic life.

Save Udvada from the rushing waters of the sea.

- K. N. Dastoor

16594 'JYOT'S IN IRANSHAH

In "Gajastak Abalish" referred to on page 2 above, Homi Chacha records (p. 89):

"In Ervad Tahmuras's old Pazand-Sanskrit-Gujarati MS. of 'Arddagvira Nama,' written by Adhyaru Bahiram sut Adhyaru Lakshmidhar in Samvat 1507 (1451 A.C.), we find at the end a short description in old Gujarati of the consecration of the 'Atas-i-Varharan'. Being, perhaps, the oldest document in existence, written when only one 'Atas-i-Varharan' was in existence in India, I give here the substance of the text, which is very

obscure and difficult to understand: "15000 'Jots' (= "flames") of Vajasta Visvanara (= "Vazista ruling-all-men"); 100 'Jots' of 'Sunara' (= "Goldsmith"); 90 'Jots' of 'Kansara' (= "Coppersmith"); 80 'Jots' of 'Luhara' (= "Ironsmith"); 70 'Jots' of 'Kathiyara' (= "Wood-cutter" (?)); 60 'Jots' of 'Kandol' (= "Baker"); 50 'Jots' of 'Kubhara' (= "Potter"); 40 'Jots' of 'Chhipa' (= "Dyer"); 30 'Jots' of 'Vanajara' (= "Forester"); 20 'Jots' of 'Bahira' (= "Outside-Fire"); 10 'Jots' of 'Jamanavara' (= "Feast"); 1 'Ghir Diva' (= "House Lamp"); 1 'Ghir-na-mangala' (= "House hearth"); 1 'Jot' of 'ljasni' (= "Yasna ceremonial"); 1 'Jot' of 'Afarangan'; 40 'Jot's of the hearth of 'Shumara' (= 'Kumbha-kara' (?) = "Potter"); 1000 'Jots' of 'Samasanhana' (= 'Burning Place'); description of 1000 'Jots' of 'Samasyana'; we must leave 3 (= three) spans of space from where the 'Samasyana' is burning; taking that fire we must prepare a 'Jot'; the 'Samasyana' spot must be allowed to be cooled: we must leave 3 (= three) spans of space from there; we are to prepare a new 'Jot'; until the new 'Jot' takes the fire from within the first 'Jot', let the new 'Jot' be prepared; till then let the heat of the former 'Jot' be cooled; taking that in the hands, we are to place it on the 'patri' (= "censer (?)"); until the heat of the second 'Jot' which is made is cooled, the "patri" is to be allowed to remain; and thereafter, there will be a thousand 'Jots' in number."

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