

Scriptural references prohibiting mixed marriages - as compiled by Mrs. Pervin J. Mistry

Our Zoroastrian religion considers both *navjote* (initiation) and *ashirvad* (wedding benediction) as **ritual** traditions. Herewith is the established evidence from the scriptures that there is religious equality among the sexes within the Zoroastrian ritual and scriptural tradition pertaining to inter-religious marriage, and that inter-religious marriage is strictly condemned in the Sacred Avesta.

(1) Vendidad, Fargard 18.62: “O Ahura Mazda, who grieves (you) with the greatest grief? Who torments (you) with the greatest injury?” Reply: “Certainly the *jahi*, who causes the procreative seeds to be mixed with the aliens.” The word “aliens” indicates *juddins*, or those who follow a different (alien) revealed religion. (“*Jud*” means different and “*din*” means religion.) “*Jahi*” is translated by the learned Vada Dasturjis of India who are well versed with the scriptures, as well as by other Zoroastrian scholars of repute, such as Sheriarji Bharucha and Kangaji, as “religiously illegal” or “religious adultery”.

The Vendidad is the 19th *Nask* out of the 21 original *Nasks* that has survived in entirety and forms an important scriptural text, liturgy, as well as a higher ritual within the sacred text of the Avesta. In this *Fargard*, a Zoroastrian male as well as a Zoroastrian female, if inter-religiously married, are identified as committing a spiritual sin!

The 21 *Nasks* that comprise the sacred text of our Holy Book, the Avesta, are the Divine Revelation of our Prophet, Asho Zarathushtra. Some of these 21 *Nasks* are partly or entirely lost (except the Vendidad which has survived in entirety), due to the plunder and destruction caused by Alexander, and later by the Arabs who conquered Iran in the 7th Century ACE. The names and contents of these sacred 21 original *Nasks* have been recorded for posterity by the learned Dasturs of Iran in the 9th Century ACE, the main source of this record being the Pahlavi Text, “Dinkard”.

(2) Husparam Nask, 31.7 states: “And the Bridge penalty upon him who has sexual intercourse with a woman who wants washing; with her who is a ‘alien’, or any of those not authorized for intercourse; the confusion of germs by the woman who grants intercourse to ‘aliens’, and other sin which they commit about like matters.” Here too, the words ‘alien’ and ‘aliens’ indicate those who follow a different revealed religion. According to this *Nask* also, inter-religious marriage is considered a spiritual sin for a Zoroastrian male as well as for a Zoroastrian female and the ensuing punishment is “spiritual”, in the spiritual world, at the *Chinvat* Bridge. The *Chinvat* is referred to a spiritual “Bridge”, a spiritual cross-over area between the physical and the spiritual worlds where Judgement is given to the ‘soul’ on the morning of the fourth day (“*chahrum*” or 72 hours) after death.

The Husparam Nask is the 17th *Nask* out of the original 21 *Nasks* that comprise the sacred Scriptures.

(3) Patet Pashemani, Karda 3, declares inter-religious marriage as “*gunah-e ravani*” or a spiritual sin because it is committed against one’s spiritual soul (*ravan*). It is listed under the various “*akho paye gunah*”, meaning sins that destroy the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Religion from its very foundation. According to our ritualistic and scriptural traditions inter-religious marriages are irrefutably declared as spiritual sin and here also no distinction of the sexes is mentioned!

Religion is a way of life and is to be followed by obeying certain revealed set of immutable spiritual laws that are rooted in scriptures, rituals and traditions. In any inter-religious

marriage these are violated as both partners resolve to keep peace at home by compromising on religious issues. The progeny do not spiritually benefit from a strong religious bond or the essential religious environment in the home. Inter-religiously married couples, through their own example, cannot advise their children to marry within any one particular religious community. Subsequently, both the religions of both the spouses are diluted and not perpetuated further. This is why, in the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Religion, the spiritual sin of inter-religious marriage is considered as “*akho paye gunah*”, or one that destroys the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Religion from its foundation by severing the lineage (“*tokham*”) and its continuity.

(4) The Pazend Setayesh, Chithrem Buyat, specifies, “May *chithra* (‘seed’ or ‘*tokham-e Kiyān*’) be preserved in this house. May the nourishment and blessedness of this ‘seed’ be preserved in this house. May there be produced good ‘seeds’ **among themselves** in this house”. The words, “among themselves”, specifies producing ‘seeds’ (children) from the union between two Mazdayasni Zoroastrians only! There is absolutely no scriptural permission for the acceptance of inter-religious marriage anywhere within the text of the sacred Avesta. If inter-religious marriages are not received as religiously sanctified, acceptance of the progeny, as “Zoroastrians”, of such religiously unauthorized unions is untenable.

(5) Yasna 53 (Vahishta-Ishti Gatha), is prayed during the wedding ritual. Its recitation is a travesty if prayed before a couple who are not both Mazdayasni Zoroastrians because the ritual of marriage involves certain prescribed rituals that only Zoroastrians can undergo. The Religion accepts only the *ashirvad* or “*doa-i-paeman*” ritual as religiously valid, and which can be performed only if both partners are Mazdayasni Zoroastrians and after both the partners go through the required ritual of *naahn* (*religious ablution*). Our religion, like other religions, does not accept legal signing of a marriage contract as a **religiously** valid marriage ritual. Marriage contracted between two individuals of two different religions may be considered legal by any secular law but its acceptance cannot be enforced on a religious community that has been following its own religion and scriptural laws since millennia.

The Benediction specifies that the ritual is performed according to the laws of the religion: “*avar-dad va ain-i din-i Mazdayasni*”. The laws essentially require a ritual “*naahn*” to be administered with “*nirang*” and *kusti-padyab* which a *juddin* partner cannot undergo! The words “*hum dadastani*”, recited during the *ashirvad* ritual, indicate that both partners **are** Mazdayasni Zoroastrians! The couple also pledges to accept Asho Zarathushtra as their Prophet. Consequently, the *ashirvad* ritual wherein one partner is a *juddin*, is religiously null and void! It is a religious mockery since *naahn*, *nirang* and *kusti-padyab* cannot be administered to *juddins*. It should be noted that the Zoroastrian religion does not accept proselytes! As proven again and again by the Vada Dasturjis in writing, there is no such word as “conversion” (from religion to religion) in our religious scriptures! We are enjoined to convert only our own vices to virtues, and that is the only moral conversion taught in our scriptures. Our religion does not accept converts from other divinely revealed religions nor does it accept inter-religious marriage.

(6) Pahlavi References: The Pahlavi Text, Dinkard, Book II (written in Iran during the 9th Century ACE), compares the mixing of “seeds” between a Zoroastrian and a *juddin* as a product which belongs to neither religion! The Dinkard states that “for this reason a good deal of benefit accrues from the preservation of the seed-essential.” It speaks of spiritual “sterility” resulting from mixing of “seeds” through inter-religious marriage because the progeny does not belong to one particular religion and in this way the original “seed” is cut off from the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Religion. It is a fact that children of intermarriage themselves marry out causing the “seed” to be further diluted and cut off from the

mainstream. The Pahlavi term applied to Mazdayasni Zoroastrians is “*tokhmak paspan*” or “preservers of the seed”.

The Pahlavi Texts, being written by the High Priests of Iran between the 9th and the 11th centuries ACE, take precedence over any other later texts or correspondences such as the *Rivayats*.

(7) “**Tokhmak Paspani**” is so ingrained in the Irani psyche that even today, nomadic tribes in Iran, such as the Bakhtiari, Qashquai, Shahsavans, etc., marry only within their own tribes! Although these tribes follow Islam, they condemn even inter-tribal marriage in order to preserve their individual traditions and lifestyle. In Iran, as in any other Islamic regime, inter-religious marriage is not considered legal because according to Muslim law, both spouses must be Muslims.

According to the Parsee Personal Law, both the spouses must be Mazdayasni Zoroastrians (Parsees), the ritual of *ashirvad* must be performed for marriage to be religiously valid, and the *ashirvad* should be performed by duly initiated Priests in the presence of at least two Parsee witnesses.

(8) **Ganje Shayegan**: The contents of this book were written in the 6th Century ACE. In the Preface (translated from the original Pahlavi text by Peshutan Dastur Behramji Sanjana, 1885), Vazorgmithra, one of the Chief Ministers at the Court of King Khushru, is quoted as advising the King not to hand over the crown to Prince Hormazd because he was the son of Khushru's juddin wife. This proves that even in the days of the Sassanian Empire, inter-religious marriage was not accepted but strongly opposed and condemned as per our long-standing millennia old religious tradition. It is a fact of history that the sons of intermarried royalty indulged in treason, proselytism, patricide, and rebellion against the Zoroastrian Religion which eventually destroyed faith in religion and sadly led to the fall of the Sassanian Empire.

The Zoroastrian community has always condemned inter-religious marriages. During the worst centuries of religious persecution we faced in Iran at the hands of the Muslim invaders, marrying any Muslim would have meant escape from certain death and unbearable persecution. Yet, even in those worst days, the Zoroastrians in Iran refrained from marrying outside and preferred death to intermarriage. Our scriptures categorically condemn inter-religious marriages.

Historically, we left our native homeland of Iran in the eighth century ACE to find sanctity in India in order to protect and preserve our religion and religious identity through ‘*boonak pasbani*’. If this were not so, and we simply wanted to preserve only our racial or ethnic identity, the Parsee Zoroastrians would have survived in Iran as any national or ethnic group by converting to Islam and assimilating with the Islamic Iranian community through inter-religious marriages. The prime reason why we have followed our religious mandate of ‘*boonak pasbani*’ through all the trials and through countless generations is because we wanted to preserve our religion and survive as a distinct religious community by following our scriptural tenets and specific life style.

Religion is divinely revealed. The Prophets who have held spiritual communion with the Divine have subsequently revealed their doctrines to the followers of those specific prescribed paths. The followers follow the teachings with faith and devotion since Religion is not man-made. It is not a political democracy wherein individuals choose whatever aspect of the revealed teachings they wish to obey and practice, and discard the rest

‘democratically’! The so-called ‘democracy’ becomes a grave temptation to a denial of the Prophet’s authority as well as the authority of the revealed scriptures

In Present Times: On 16th April 1905, a *Samast Anjuman Meeting* was called and the community emphatically condemned the acts of proselytism as well as inter-religious marriage as harmful to its survival and also discordant with the teachings of the religion. The Zoroastrian community has repeatedly expressed disapproval towards conversion and acceptance of inter-religious marriages. Resolutions condemning inter-religious marriage were also passed in **1949** and **1978** at Public Meetings of the Parsee community.

The Athornan Mandal and the Jashan Committee called a meeting of *mobeds* (priests) in November **1990**. At this Meeting, Resolutions were passed by the *mobeds* against intermarriage and acceptance of progeny of such religiously illegal unions, and against the renegade *mobeds* who performed untenable actions. Subsequently, at a mammoth Meeting of the Parsee Zoroastrian Community held on 30th May **1991**, unanimous support was carried to demonstrate agreement with the *mobeds* for the Resolution they passed in 1990.

The Zoroastrian community has been ultra faithful, for the past thirteen centuries plus to the land that gave us refuge, India, and to our host, the Hindus who in turn have appreciated us for our religious values, culture, traditions and scriptures that are very similar to their own. Our contribution to Hindustan and to the whole world is phenomenal; yet, we do so without getting assimilated religiously. We adhere to our religion and never interfere with others. We have co-existed peacefully and with dignity and respect with the Hindus, Muslims and the other religious communities without converting others to our religion or accepting inter-religious marriages that are scripturally forbidden.

In any religion, if the religious doctrines are not enforced and the detractors are permitted to execute their personal ‘rights’ and ‘freedom’, there would be no “followers” and no revealed religions! Individuals would end up following their own personal rules defining what is right and wrong based on convenient choices. This leads to total chaos of religious law and order. No man-made laws may supercede divinely revealed religious laws emphasized in the scriptures if these laws do not interfere with or threaten other religions and communities. The prescribed scriptural laws are immutable and eternal. Times and societal trends change for either better or worse and we, as Parsee Zoroastrians, certainly do not have to subscribe to adverse changes propagated by some Parsee Zoroastrians themselves who try to bend and distort truth to suit their convenience because they or their relatives have intermarried. There is only one Path. It is straight and narrow. The Path does not change or broaden to suit individual whims and conveniences.

Our religion has stood the test of time irrespective of the fall of our Sassanian Empire, the subsequent destruction of our Scriptures and the unbearable persecution faced by the community for countless centuries. We have, for nearly 1,400 years, numbered only as a drop in the ocean, a mere hundred thousand, worldwide. The issue of conversion as well as acceptance of inter-religious marriage is the most consequential one facing our microscopic Community’s survival.

Historically, the groups of Zoroastrians who migrated out of Iran after the downfall of the Sassanian Empire towards China and Europe assimilated through inter-religious marriages and conversion with the host communities. These communities of Zoroastrians who numbered in hundreds of thousands were wiped out within two to three generations due to inter-religious marriages. Today, there remains only the archeological evidence to prove that

they had inhabited these lands. In North India as well, especially in the regions of Punjab and Rajasthan, the Zoroastrian community was wiped out due to inter-religious marriages. Only the group of Zoroastrians that landed in the region of Gujarat, at Diu and later at Sanjan, survived as a thriving religious community because we, their descendants, have always adhered to our spiritual disciplines, *boonak pasbaani* being the most important one. By maintaining religious seclusion and retaining our distinct religious identity, we have survived. Recent history records the extinction of small communities and tribes whose language, culture and religion become extinct due to intermarriage. The tribe of Birales in Africa is a prime example (*National Geographic*, July 1991). The recent study carried out by the authorities on the Andaman Islands is yet another proof that the Andamanee Islanders would have become extinct through assimilation had they not resolved to marry only among their own tribe. It needs to be mentioned that only *tokham* and marrying within the community through countless generations has assured our survival as a religious community and we have produced such stalwarts as Lovji Wadia, Dinshaw Petit, Ardeshir Godrej, Dinshawji Adenwalla, Cawasji Jehangir Readymoney, Dadabhai Naoroji, Phirozshah Mehta, Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy, Jamsetji Tata, Dasturji MeherjiRana, Dasturji Neriosang Dhaval, and countless others!

- by Mrs. Pervin J. Mistry