

“He who
understands the
principle of
vibration has
grasped the
sceptre of
power”



True Stories A Parsi Ought To Know



By Farida K. Antia



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PREFACE

Apart from telling stories from Shahnameh, to the children of our religious class and to the adults in our Humberdagi session, I made it a point to narrate true Parsi stories to them. The general refrain from the young and old in every class was "Aunty story, aunty story". That made me realize the importance of story telling. The interest and impact it generated was enormous. This made me decide to share the same stories with a larger audience - with my community at large.

Nothing in this book is original. I have merely gathered true Parsi stories from various sources and published them in this book. My intention in doing so would be made amply clear to the reader as he/she wades through its pages.

The book is divided into 4 segments. Start reading whichever interests you and if you like it, pass it on to other like-minded people.

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THE POWER OF PRAYERS

A collection of
true Parsi stories that prove the power
& efficacy of Zoroastrian Prayers.



"More things are wrought by prayers than this world dreams of"

- Lord Tennyson

THE POWER OF THE MOST POWERFUL PRAYER

YATHA AHU VAIRYO

This is a true story of how a 24 yrs. old Parsi deck cadet, Adil D. Dumasia saved the life of a fellow cadet, B. Panigrahi on board the ship MT Yellow Star.

Cadet Panigrahi was checking the draft marks when he slipped and fell in the near freezing waters about 24 nautical miles away from St. Petersburg. Cadet Dumasia, who was at the scene, immediately raised the emergency alarm and threw a lifebuoy. Cadet Panigrahi didn't know how to swim and simply held on to the lifebuoy. Those who had by then gathered at the scene kept shouting at Panigrahi to keep his hands and legs moving. The young man, however, was too scared and cold to do anything. The sea was not only very cold, but also turbulent.



As the minutes and seconds began to tick away, Panigrahi continued to drift away from the ship. All on board realized that by the time a lifeboat could be lowered and rowed towards Panigrahi, the victim could die of hypothermia. It was at this moment that cadet Dumasia decided to take the risk and jump into the near freezing waters to save the life of his fellow cadet.

The moment he hit the waters, the full impact of the impulsive action dawned on him. Dumasia realised that in an attempt to save his colleague, he may endanger his own life. However having taken the plunge, he decided not to back out and swam 200 meters towards the victim. Holding his colleague in one hand, he began to swim back towards the ship.

As Dumasia neared the ship, his own body began to grow numb and his head began to fall backwards. The moment he put Panigrahi to safety, he realized that he had no strength left to save himself, "It seemed as if all the heat and energy had left my body. I could not think clearly and it seemed as if my body had lost all sensation. I just could not climb up the ladder to safety". Dumasia recalls "I was in the water for 27 minutes. However the last 3 minutes seemed to me like the end of the world. Even in this confused state, I just remembered to recite the "Yatha Ahu Vairyo". I am quite certain, I survived thanks to my prayers". Dumasia adds with confidence.

For 4 days Dumasia suffered multiple cramps and was in agony. It was a near brush with death. Dumasia, however, lived to write the story to his parents in Mumbai, thanks to Yatha Ahu Vairyo.

Kudos to his parents or his teacher who taught him the value of the priceless Yatha Ahu Vairyo, which he applied at the right time to save his life.

(This article was written by Noshir H. Dadrawala in Jam-e-Jamshed of 26th Sept. 1999. It is reproduced here with minute changes.)

PRAYER - THE SAVIOUR

It was in the year 1980 that I was assigned Audit duties in a nationalised bank. I was required to travel extensively to nook and corner of India accompanied by my assistant named Sankar. Audit was like a secret mission. In order to protect the bank's interest, I was forbidden to disclose the next audit destination to anyone.

On closing the audit report of Basti Shaikh Branch of Ludhiana, I received a coded order from head office to proceed to Nowshera, a small border town located in Jammu region. By the time we reached Nowshera, it was past midnight. That night we stayed in a small lodge.

Next day, we shifted to a Government Dak Bungalow located on the outskirts of the town, which had large comfortable and clean rooms. A huge wall, all around the bungalow surrounded the compound.

After working late hours we had no alternative but to walk to the Dak Bungalow daily as no conveyance was available. The street lights were only upto a certain point of the town.

On one occasion, by the time we could conclude the day's work it was about 11 p.m. Walking and flashing the torch on the road ahead we kept on discussing about the day's work. Normally, it wouldn't take even 15-20 min. to reach Dak Bungalow. But today it seemed to be taking more time.

"Sankar, what's happening? Isn't it more than half an hour, we are walking now?" I stated, worried. We kept on walking further. At long last, I flashed the torch on my wrist watch. My God! It was ten minutes past midnight. It was a desolate area with not a soul around to help us. All of a sudden, it started drizzling too and we had no rain gear. Added to that the screeching sound of the night insects was frightening. Scared, I started saying prayers loudly. How can we miss the Dak Bungalow with a high wall and a huge iron gate?



All of a sudden, we saw a figure approaching us from the opposite direction. Looked like a local resident clad in clean white Kurta-pyjama. Gathering courage, I asked, "Bhaisaab, Government Dak Bungalow kahan hai? (Brother, where is the Dak Bungalow)" "Mere saath chale Aao" (come with me) was the reply. Within a couple of minutes the stranger guided us to our destination!!!. First thing we did was to put on the lights.

After that, just to thank the stranger, I turned around and called "Bhaisaab, Bhaisaab" Despite flashing the torch all around the building, we could not spot him. The stranger just disappeared in thin air! We could hardly sleep that night. Throughout the night we kept the lights on.

(This incident was written by Noshier E.R. Wadia, in Jam-e-Jamshed and is reproduced here in his own words.)

EXPERIENCE OF A MIRACLE

My mother-in-law, Mrs. Meherbanoo Framroze Kekobad, one day, after doing the "Dhoop Lobaan" in the evening, felt as if somebody was pulling her hand. She was guided by an unseen force towards a low cupboard. Her hand was raised and she grabbed a pencil on the top. She was pulled again to a writing pad on a table. Her hand scribbled something and it was, "Mr. Nusserwanji Billimoria very sick at Navsari, help required". She knew this editor of "Cherag" who was a great friend of her father Sorabji Dosabhai Paymaster. She at once reported to her father and he rushed up by the next train from Surat within two hours. He found Mr. Nusserwanji Billimoria very sick with nobody around to help him. He sent a telegram to his son, Framroze who was a doctor in Bombay. He also rushed and gave Mr. Billimoria full and urgent medical attention and relief.

Mr. Nusserwanji Billimoria was known to be very religious and this is one instance of how God in His wisdom sends a message in His own way to help a good lonely soul in distress. This also shows that we are not alone in this world.



(This article, written by K.D. Chargemen (Bombay) was published in Jan-Feb. 1990 issue no. 45 of Dharma Prakash.)

WITH NONE TO HELP YOU, YOU TURN TOWARDS....

Coverji Rustomji Aibara, served as an officer in the British army in-charge of ration. (Food), during the British rule.

He was sent with the army officers to Kabul to fight the war. As soon as the army reached Kabul, they were surrounded by the Kabul army. They had to escape to a cave in the mountain near by.

There was ration for the army to last for 2 days but Coverji managed to feed the whole army for 20-25 days. The stock of ration being over, the army had to go without food or water for days.

During those days, there were no aeroplanes or any communication system. The army was stranded without food and water in wilderness. The soldiers began to fall sick and many died. Compassionate but helpless Coverji could not bear to see the plight of his comrades. Coverji Aibara took a pinch of earth instead of water and started performing his kusti prayers and Sarosh Baj. He was a very religious man and had complete faith in his prayers and religion. He prayed with full faith asking for divine help in feeding the army.

Soon, he saw at a distance, a human form with white robe and offered obeissance to him. He hesitantly asked for food and water from this holy figure. The latter recognized Coverji as a Zarathoshti, since he was wearing a cap on his head. He asked him, "Why are you not praying Behman Yasht? Behman Ameshaspand will solve your problem. There is an old dry well near by". Coverji replied that Behman Yasht had been lost to the Parsis since ages. Upon hearing this, the holy figure, decided to pray Behman Yasht on behalf of Coverji and ask for His Divine intervention. He asked him to do kusti and pray silently for His help. He asked them to cover the top of the well so that overflowing water may not get wasted.



As the holy figure started praying Behman Yasht, the dry well began to fill up with water and rise up. He asked them to make full use of the water as required but not to waste any. The whole army was surprised to see this miracle unfold before their eyes. They began to drink and wash themselves, and filled their empty drums with water. The water which had come upto the brim of the well, began receding after the army made full use of it.

The holy figure showed them some fruit trees at a distance and asked them to eat them to satiate their hunger. He guided them to the nearest fruit tree and then disappeared.

PRAYER - THE SOLUTION TO ALL PROBLEMS

This incident took place in Surat. There was a pious mobed whose surname was Turel. Everyday he would pray in the backyard, where there was a pipal tree. Behind his backyard was the cottage of a "Dhero" (untouchable). The Dhero decided to learn black magic. He sought out an "Aghori" (a sadhu who worships Kali, performs black magic and is a meat eater and stays in a cemetery) to be his guru. The Aghori started him on the basic magic spell called "Muth Marvi" in which magic words are chanted against any living thing, a person, a plant or an animal. After learning the spell, the Dhero decided to try his spell on a living tree. He could see the pipal tree from his house. He performed his black magic and was happy to see the tree turning brown.

Next day when Mobed Turel came to the backyard to pray, he was surprised to see the Pipal tree turning brown. He filled a vessel with water and prayed his daily prayers and nirangs. He then emptied the consecrated water on the pipal tree. By evening, the pipal tree was green again and flourishing but at the same time the tree turned green, the Dhero got seriously ill. His wife called the Aghori to tell him that his disciple got very ill after practising the black magic. The Aghori asked the Dhero, "On whom did you practice the Muth?" The Dhero told him he had tried it on a pipal tree, which belonged to a Parsi Priest.

The Aghori advised the Dhero not to practice black magic against the Bawajis and told him that their prayers are more powerful than any magic he knew. He asked the Dhero to come with him to the mobed's house. They both stood at the front door. The mobed asked them to stay at a distance and asked them what they wanted. The Aghori explained the situation and asked the mobed to forgive the Dhero. Mobed Turel asked the Dhero to promise never to practice black magic again and recited the prayer of "Shekaste Shekaste Shaitaan". The Dhero recovered from his illness after a few days.



EXPLORE THE GEMS WITHIN YOUR RELIGION

Long before the railways were constructed, a Zoroastrian was crossing the country on foot. He found himself in a barren desolate land with no water anywhere around. He was extremely thirsty when he suddenly saw a well with water in it. He sat on it wondering how to draw the water. Within a short time, a thirsty Brahmin showed up. He asked the Parsi for a rope and a container to draw water from the well.

Since the Parsi had none, he took out a box, containing powdered sandalwood. The brahmin applied the sandalwood on his forehead and other parts, looked into the well, prayed some mantras and clapped. Immediately the waters started rising and they started receding as soon as they had both quenched their thirst.

After drinking the water, the brahmin walked off. The Parsi pleaded with him to give him the mantras. The brahmin replied,

"Go and ask any Andhyaru (a person of Zoroastrian priestly class). The mantras I prayed was a paragraph from your, "Akhaiyacha Ha" prayer.



(This story appeared in the book "Khune Padi Rahela Avesta na bhantaro" by Mober Dhunjisha Nasserwanji Nalladaru of Surat, who had heard this story from his father. Mr. Behramsha Naoroji Shroff (The famous mystic) had also heard this story from another source.)

RELIGION STEPS IN WHERE SCIENCE FAILS

This is the story of a young girl named Jasmine (name changed) who resided in Mumbai. She went to take tuition from a Parsi lady, close to her house.

The tuition teacher's son was to undergo the Navar ceremony and she decided to take all her tuition children to a town in Gujarat, to witness the Navar ceremony. All the children embarked on this journey along with Jasmine who was on the threshold of adolescence. Everything went well, and they all returned happily.

But a nightmare began for Jasmine's mother. She noticed that things were disappearing from the house. At first, it was attributed to forgetfulness or misplacement. Soon she realised, that it was neither of the two. Things started missing from purses, cupboards, tables. After great observation, she realised that things were disappearing when Jasmine was in the house. The sweeper brought them back from the backyard. The desperate mother came to the tuition teacher, narrated her ordeal and asked if Jasmine had gone alone anywhere, or urinated near a tree. The teacher could not recall.

The situation became more serious when important items went missing from the house, not only from her house, but also from the teacher's house. The teacher would find coins under the bed, or table whilst sweeping the floor. The coins were shining as if they had come out straight from the mint.

It was then that the distraught mother decided that something had to be done. She realised that the problem was out of the sphere of science and medicine. Herself, being very religious, she sought the help of mobeds from an Atashbehram.

The writer herself was a child at that time, so she can give only the vague account which she had heard from others as under:

The mobeds came to the house, wrote some nirang (holy incantations) on a piece of paper and put them in the corners of the house. They sprinkled taro (bull's urine) in the corners. I do not know how many days it was kept, but on the appointed day, they performed a Jashan in the house. During the ceremony, a slab of the ceiling fell near where the Jashan was performed. But none were hurt, and with the completion of the ceremony, it was the end of the ordeal for the mother.

Jasmine led a normal life, married and is happy with children and grand children.



THE MIRACLE OF DASTUR PESUJI

This is the story of Dastur Pesuji of Surat. This incident took place more than 200 years ago. Surat was ruled by a Nawab who reported to the Mughal emperor.

The nawab of Surat had many children including a most beautiful and innocent daughter, who unfortunately had become possessed by an evil spirit, known as Jin. As a result, she exhibited amazing strength during bouts of violence, became uncontrollable and almost manic. The distressed Nawab took help of several high-ranking muslim priests and maulvis, but none were able to cure the malady. The reason put forth by them was that the possessed spirit was very powerful and there was danger to the life of the exorcist.

Her condition kept deteriorating. Somebody advised the Nawab to take help of Parsi priests as many were pious and powerful. Taking this advice, the nawab approached a very prominent and rich Parsi businessman called Mancherji Seth who was often present in his court.

Taking Mancherji Seth into confidence, the Nawab requested him for help and assured him that if successful the Nawab would forever be grateful to Mancherji and the entire community. Realising that this was a delicate situation which could go awry for the community, Mancherji convened a meeting of all the leading priests of Surat and asked their opinion. They unanimously declared Dastur Pesuji as the only one fit for this task. He was the Mobedan mobed, who lived in near seclusion, practising the strict tarikats of his religion and immersing himself in constant prayers, and he had the "Amal" or spiritual power to use the sacred Avesta mantras for such purposes.

Mancherji Seth approached Dastur Pesuji and briefed him about the situation. He gently counselled the priest to take up the assignment only if he was absolutely sure of the outcome since failure would mean not only shame but also possible harm to the community. The priest closed his eyes, and when he opened them, told Mancherji to go to the Nawab's palace and inform him that his daughter's health would start improving from this very instant and on a particular day, Dastur Pesuji would completely cure her by ridding her of her malady.

The days passed, and the Nawab noticed that his daughter seemed calm and composed on the moonless night (Amas) when previously she was most violent on that day. After a few days, Dastur Pesuji told Mancherji to bring the daughter to his residence, to which the Nawab declined, and requested Dasturji to come to the palace.



Reluctantly, Dasturji agreed. He instructed them to have a chair ready which should be either iron, brass or any other metal. Besides three or four ladies of menopausal age should be there to hold her when she started screaming. They should do so compassionately. He also stated that his task would be performed only on ground floor.

On the appointed day, Dastur Pesuji came on foot to the palace. He was greeted with great respect. The floor of the room was covered with costly rugs. But Dasturji politely asked them to remove the rugs as it could nullify his amal and cause the exorcism to fail. Dasturji walked in the room after the rugs were removed and had a first glance at the girl who had subdued a lot. Dasturji softly and politely asked the girl in Urdu to sit on the silver chair which the Nawab had arranged for her. She silently obeyed him and sat down. Dastur Pesuji took out a small glass bottle from his priestly attire. The bottle had a tight fitting, glass stopper, on which was tied a small piece of cotton string such that the bottle could be lifted and held straight with a finger. Dasturji opened the bottle and placed it near the chair. Then he went back a few steps and drawing a 'Kash' or invisible spiritual boundary around himself, began to very softly chant a sacred Mantra. As he prayed on, the girl screamed out loudly, "Oh mother"! and stood up from the chair. Immediately the ladies caught her tenderly and consoled her. As this was happening Dastur Pesuji came out of Kash, and still loudly praying the mantras tightly closed the mouth of the bottle with the glass stopper and moved the bottle aside to another place close by.

Soon the girl stopped crying and was calm and at ease. Dasturji asked her how she felt. She replied, "I feel as though a great weight, which was constantly crushing my body and my soul and which was causing me great distress, has suddenly lifted and I am feeling much better now". The Nawab who was silently watching this, was overjoyed and could not contain his happiness at the awe and respect he felt for the pious Dastur.

As he was leaving, the witty Dasturji requested the Nawab to ask one of his men to carry the bottle back to his house. The Nawab had become so emotional and grateful that he himself volunteered for the task and promptly bent down to pick up the bottle. But to his surprise, could not lift it. The Nawab summoned his men but even 4 of them together could not lift it. It seemed as though the bottle had stuck to the ground.

With laughter on his bright red face, glowing with spiritual radiance, the pious Dastur again began his prayer, bent down and putting his little finger through the cotton thread, effortlessly picked up the bottle and walked away. It was then that the Nawab realized Dasturji's Amal. Thus, a simple pious Dastur managed to raise the reputation of the entire community in the eyes of the most important man in the city, and performed a miracle whose faint memory lingers on to this day.

(This story appeared with the same title in the book "Who killed prophet Zarathushtra" by Er: Marzban J. Hathiram. It is reprinted here in an abridged form.)

Z.A.G.A

Some children of Z.A.G.A (Zarthoshti Awareness Group of Ahmedabad) were taken on a picnic to Kharaghoda to show them a desert.

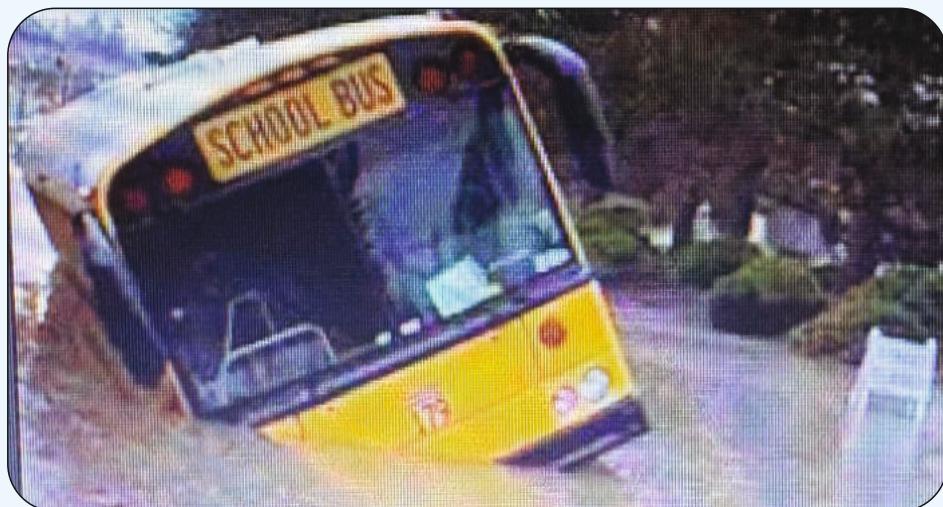
Suddenly, their bus got stuck in some soft sand and could not move. Everyone was worried, as the day was coming to its end and the light of the sun was fading out.

The experienced driver, staff and cleaners, who commuted the road daily realized that it would take 2 days to pull, push and bring the bus on the safe road.

Children were frightened and started to scream and cry, but the courageous teachers, wisely pacified the kids and asked them to pray "Yatha Ahu Vairyo" loudly. The children started the humbandagi loudly praying "Yatha Ahu Vairyo".

The driver, then desperately made the last attempt to start the bus. To everyone's surprise and joy the bus started running smoothly on the road and all returned home safely. The children kept praying the mighty Prayer with their heads covered.

The driver and the mechanics insisted to know and learn the miraculous prayer from the children, but they told them to pray "Parsi taro thabario". This corrupted form of Yatha Ahu Vairyo had proved effective for the boatmen who brought Parsis from Div to Sanjan.



(This story appeared in the book "Revelation" by Roda K. Hodivala on page 40, which is reproduced here.)

PRAYER CAN OPEN DOORS.

My cousin brother Dinyar just finished his studies to become a full fledged architect. New comers are hardly accepted and absorbed in well established firms. He ran from pillar to post, hunting for a job, but could not get a breakthrough.

He met a holy man, who asked him to pray "Kem na Mazda" 21 times daily. He seriously took it to his heart and ardently prayed. He got an opening in America and today has become a boss who absorbs many brothers, coming in search of livelihood.

Till today, even after 50 years, he continues to say this prayer.



(This article appears on pg. 38 of the book. "Revelation" by Roda K. Hodivala)

IMMOBILE AND HELPLESS ? YOU CAN STILL PRAY !

My aunty was very sick and helpless in bed. I advised her to continuously pray "Hazangharam" Prayer lying in bed. She prayed with full faith and slowly improved in health.

She is today back on her legs, running her house with family and servants. She is 93 years old today, but she madly believes in prayers which have miraculous powers.



(This article too, appears on pg. 38 of the book, "Revelation" by Roda K. Hodivala)

MIRACLE OF BRIG. GRANT.

Brig. N.B. grant of Poona had gone to visit his son in Chicago.

He was standing with folded arms after breakfast. They suddenly tended to separate
After some time legs also began to give way.

He was rushed to the hospital, where he was kept in ICU. He soon became paralysed
from head to foot. Lumbar puncture was done, but it did no good.

Neurosurgeons diagnosed different ailments, but his condition was fast deteriorating.
Doctors were afraid, his heart would give up.

When the news spread to Parsis of Chicago, they all gathered together and organised
a special prayer for his recovery.

The very next day, he started to breathe and was soon off the ventilator.
Neurosurgeons could not believe it. Doctors, staff and duty sisters exclaimed. "A miracle
has happened! Only God could have done this!"

Where doctors fail, the great healer Ardibehsht Ameshaspand can save life.



(This article appeared in Feb. Parsiana 2004, reproduced in the book "Revelation" by Roda Hodivala which again I have reproduced here.)

KALYUG? YATHA AHU VAIRYO CAN STILL DELIVER

If you happen to go to Bangalore and visit the Bai Dhunbai and Cawasji Dadabhai Daremeher you will no doubt be impressed by the beautiful stained glass paintings in the Daremeher. These paintings are the work of the artist Mrs. Beroz Shroff, a resident of Bangalore. She felt privileged that Ahura Mazda gave her the opportunity to adorn His Abode.

In an interview with Pourushasp Mehta for the Jam-e-Jamshed weekly, she was keen to share how belief in prayers has made a big difference in her life.

She has experienced the might of "Yatha Ahu Vairyo" which has made the "Impossible" "possible" not once but twice in her life.

Her first experiment with Yatha Ahu Vairyo was when she could not conceive even 6 years after marriage, with the doctors giving up all hopes since "there are five reasons for not being able to conceive, out of which I had four. One of my fallopian tubes was blocked. I had endometriosis, adhesions and a cyst. I was told by my grandfather that for any wish to come true, pray Yatha Ahu Vairyo one lakh times in 40 days. I prayed and became a mother to my daughter who is now married in Hyderabad".

Her second trial with Yatha Ahu Vairyo was in October 2023 when her husband Kayomarz was diagnosed with stage 3 of lymphoblastic cancer. The doctors had not given any hopes of cure. The treatment with chemotherapy started, but it resulted in his liver failure. It was then that Beroz started praying Yatha Ahu Vairyo as prescribed by her grandfather. Result? The liver became normal in functioning and he regained health with no trace of cancer in his body. In fact, Beroz received a phone call from the doctor asking her what she had done to bring about this miraculous cure. He said there were many other patients with similar illness and he wanted to help them in a similar way.

Yes! Try the power of Yatha when everything else fails.



NO EVIL POWER CAN HARM US

This article appeared in Gujarati in the Jam-e-Jamshed, written by the famous writer, Mahrukh Faredoon Adajanya.

She narrates the incident which happened in her small town of Adajan. There was a house at the end of the Mohlah (Colony) where they stayed. The house was considered haunted. Many tenants came to stay, but left soon because of the eery and scary experiences. At night, unearthly sounds were heard such as utensils falling and the rumbling sound of everything shaking as during an earthquake.

After many years, the Parsi owner of the house, who was in Bombay until now, decided to settle in this house of Adajan (Probably after retirement). They performed a Jashan before occupying the house. Now, the house had an ever burning divo and chants of Avesta Manthras. The fragrance of Sandalwood spread and filled the entire house. All these led to divine and positive vibrations and magnetism.

When the elders of Mahrukh's family saw that they had settled well with no untoward incident happening, they decided to pay them a visit. During the conversation, they broached upon this "haunted" topic.

The mature lady replied, "May be; that there was some evil spirit which was disturbing the peace of the tenants. There may be spirits hovering around us right now as we are talking. So what? As long as we have the armour of Sudreh-Kusti on our body, so long as we have Avesta Manthras on our lips, no power in the world can harm us".

Mahrukh states that at that time she was young and just married, but these wise words of that lady had a lasting impact on her life.



NOT BY CHANCE!

Mr. Hanoz Mistry worked at Tata Power as Company Secretary. He is also the editor of the community newsletter Parsee Voice, which deals with serious issues plaguing the community.

In episode 6 of Mazda Multi-media, the interviewer asks Mr. Mistry "How has Khshnoom influenced your personal life."?

His answer, "I am, what I am to-day because of Khshnoom. It has made me from a materially inclined individual to a spiritually inclined one. It is a matter of singular pride to-day, that I am a Parsi.

I have not landed here by chance. There was a design to it as I see it to-day. Once upon a time, I was absolutely like today's youngsters; absolutely happy-go-lucky, not bothered about religion one bit till I was 16, when I was afflicted by a deadly disease called multiple sclerosis, and I lost my eye-sight. I could most likely have been consigned to being a paralytic all my life, and life would have got over within the next 10 years.



It is then that I experienced the power of prayers. Rejuvenating, very refurbishing. I was urged by everyone to pray all the time, and as much as I prayed, I realized the effect it was having in me. My body was turning normal. I could see my eyesight coming back.

My doctors told me, I was one of the very rare cases who had escaped the ill effects of the disease".

With such solid proof of the power of Avesta prayers, do we need to look anywhere else?

JIMMY ENGINEER

Jimmy Engineer was born in 1954 in Baluchistan (Loralai) Pakistan. When he was 6 years old, doctors told his family that both his kidneys were failing and he had 3 months to live. Three months after, he was still alive. Doctors re-examined him and said that his kidneys appeared "brand new". His family says, it was prayer power that caused this miracle. In Lahore, he has painted a mural depicting scenes from Javed Namah, a master piece of Persian poetry, inspired by Dante's Divine Comedy.



His Mural at Lahore

UNBELIEVABLE!



The Sorabji Thoothi Agiary, located at Walkeshwar Road, Mumbai was consecrated on the 29th May 1859 by late Mrs. Cooverbai S. Thoothi, on her own land, overlooking the sea, in pious memory of her beloved husband who passed away in 1858.

It is mandatory to have a well, in or near the Agiary. The well was built in this Agiary, but unfortunately it spewed out salt water, which rendered it useless for purificatory process. Lady Cooverbai was undaunted and prayed to get divine guidance, which was granted to her. Next day, she told the labourers to make a wooden plank for her. She then

sat on it and called upon the workers to lower her into depths of the 85ft. deep well. There she remained, and offered devout prayers for more than 3 hours until sunset. Then she asked to be brought back up and forbade anyone to go near the well until she returned the next morning.

The next morning, the process was repeated. Upon coming out of the well, she ordered that the well be completely covered and none should come near it.

The following day, she ordered the well to be uncovered and with her own hands, she drew out the water. By a divine miracle, the well delivered water of greatest purity and sweetness. It continues to do so after 164 years.

The well has acquired a reputation of being extremely holy. Many devotees have had their problems solved and obtained great blessings from its immense spiritual powers.

Professor Hemmadeen, the noted Zoroastrian scholar and well-known psychic from Germany, has described this Agiary and its well as "One of the holiest places in the city".

Every system of science has its limitations but prayer power is limitless. Our salute to this aged lady who has proved that "Where there is a will, there is a way". Besides, she has achieved a miraculous feat, without any machines, without spending a single penny, which modern science, with all its finance and technology has failed to achieve.



IT IS NOT FOR NOTHING THAT THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION STILL SURVIVES!

This story took place in the township of Deolali (India). The township, a military camp was under the command of an Englishman, who arrived with his family and was in search of living quarters. Eventually, he found a bungalow, which was however not for hire, since it was considered haunted by the locals. The Englishman, however, decided to live in it.

Every night, after retiring to bed, he would hear loud bangs coming from upper floor and the roof, as if someone or a group of people were thrashing the premises. With a gun by his side, he often went round the house, but everything seemed normal, and undisturbed. This happened every night, and ultimately ruined his sleep and that of his family.

After due consultations with the locals, he sought the help of the resident Christian priest, then Hindu brahmins/sadhus and many others, but to no avail. It was then that someone suggested him that he should take the help of a Zoroastrian priest.

At the Deolali Agiary, he met a mobed, Jamshed N. Sidhwa who was a Yaozdathregar mobed from Udwada. He volunteered to end this menace.

He arrived early in the evening, washed one room by himself and placed the Afarganyu, Sandalwood, Loban, divo from the Agiary, and ordered that no one should enter the room.

After thoroughly purifying himself he arrived at the bungalow, and entered the prepared room, which he had cordoned off with a sand "Pavi". He lighted the divo and the fire. After performing the Kusti, and mandatory prayers, he started praying the Vendidad. The mobed, and the Englishman sitting outside, could hear the banging noises from the roof. After sometime, there was a tremendously loud thunderclap whereupon all the lights of the bungalow and outside were extinguished, but the divo continued to glow. The mobed continued to pray in the light of the divo, until just before dawn, when he finished his Vendidad prayers.

To the utter astonishment, relief and joy to the Englishman, all noises ceased permanently after the thunderclap.

(Source: *The importance of Vendidad in the Zarathushti Religion by Ervad Behramshah Hormusji Bharda (1990)*)



MIRACLES ASSOCIATED



**WITH OUR
FIRE - TEMPLES**

THE FLAMES OF FAITH : *A historical Saga*

"Lhotse" Air India's Boeing 707 began taxiing on the tarmac and as the big aeroplane lost touch with the ground and became airborne, chants of Yatha Ahu Vairyō rent the aircraft. For, this was a very special journey on a very special mission. Flying on board the chartered plane was a very, very special and important entity - Atash-e-adaran.

This then, is the story of a very important and almost miraculous chapter in the history of Zarathushtris. An event which took place in the life time of most of us. Join us as we "fly" down to the Red sea port of Aden, situated on the Arabian Peninsula. Welcome aboard the "Lhotse".

Many Parsis had gone to distant shores to seek fortunes and wealth, and many settled abroad. They even built Fire-temples to cater to the religious and spiritual needs of the Parsis. One such Agiary was built at Zanzibar which unfortunately had to be closed down when Parsis left that place and the Atash Padsha there just "died out". Shanghai in China, too, had a fire-temple which had to be closed down, when the communists took over China. Another Agiary was the one at Aden in the country of Yemen.

Aden, in those days was a thriving, trading port, a free port like Singapore. Located at a strategic point on the Arabian Peninsula, it was the port through which ships passed from West to East and East to West, via the Suez Canal. Aden had a large number of Parsis - around 1300 and in the year 1883, they built an Agiary there, where the consecrated Atash was of Adaran grade. This Agiary was built by Cowasjee Dinshaw family who were in the business of shipping. This family also built a mosque for the local Mohamedan population which is known as the Cowasjee Masjid and is still in use in Aden.

In 1967, the British left Yemen and South Yemen turned into a communist country. Aden soon lost its prime position, as an important trading port. Business declined and a number of foreigners working there started leaving the country. So did the Parsis.

With the advent of communism, the Agiary, Dokhma and their funds became state property. When almost all Parsis started leaving, Cowasjee Dinshaw, the great grandson of the founder, decided that he would not let the holy Atash which had sustained and nurtured the community in this land, just die away.

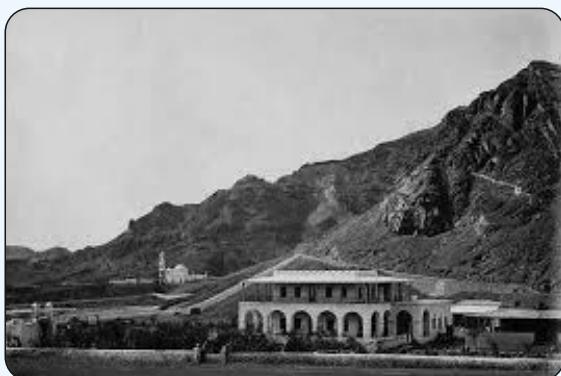
Cowasjee Dinshaw firmly believed that this Atash had miraculous powers. During the fight to oust the British, inspite of all the bombings and destruction, the Agiary was never touched even by a splinter.

After considering many options, they decided to shift the fire to India. It took a lot of persuasion from the Indian Foreign Ministry, Mr. Y.B. Chavan and even Mrs. Indira Gandhi personally to make the Yemeni government finally agree to let the fire be shifted to India. In a meeting of the Non Aligned Nations held in Colombo, Y.B. Chavan, personally met the

head of Yemeni Govt. and once again took up this topic for discussion. At last, the South Yemeni Govt. agreed much to the joy and relief for the Parsis of Aden. The condition was that it would have to be moved out at midnight. This was agreed to by Mr. Dinshaw.

But much more trials and tribulations had to be passed through almost like a test through fire itself. Further permission had to be taken that the holy Atash would not be viewed by any non-Zoroastrian which too, was granted reluctantly by their govt., after a lot of persuasion on the part of our Foreign Ministry.

No sooner was this news known, a new controversy broke out in the community in India. There was a lot of debate on how, the Atash could be transported. Mr. Dinshaw approached Field Marshal Sam Manecksha to chalk out the best land route. Manecksha's route plan, meant passing through the holy cities of Mecca and Madina, where non-muslims are not allowed to even enter the cities. Land route meant crossing many rivers, therefore discarded, since Atash cannot be carried over wide expanse of water. For the same reason, sea route was also out of question.



Aden Fire Temple



Lonavala Fire Temple

So, what other avenue was left but to fly the Holy Fire? Have you heard of carrying fire in an aircraft? From the point of security this was a highly dangerous thing to do. After a lot of discussions and debate, it seemed the only option possible. Thus, the decision was taken to fly it to Bombay.

Air India was contacted. Air India agreed to provide an aircraft on a charter basis. This was a Boeing 707. To transport this very special "passenger" - consecrated fire of the Adaran grade it was essential, that purity and some religious injunctions be observed.

The first injunction was that only Parsi Zarathushtis be on board the aircraft. Thus Air India began identifying Parsee crew. Capt. Sam Peddar was nominated for this adventure. For this, he was required to fly a few 707s of Indian Airlines to clock-in some more hours for flying a Boeing 707 as he had now graduated onto the 747 Jumbo Jets.

The engineering dept. of Air India under the supervision of their then Deputy Director of Engineering, Mr. N.S. Mistry, prepared a special urn to carry the Holy Fire in. They also made a big box which would hold the urn. These were made of aluminium and other metals.

The configuration of the First Class section in the aircraft - "Lhotse" - had to be changed to accomodate the box.

Soon it was time for the Holy Fire to leave the shores of Aden.

Just on the eve of departure, an unexpected problem arose. The police commissioner of Aden who was a muslim, informed the few remaining Parsis, that he would be coming over the next day to personally inspect the fire, the Urn and the box. No amount of entreaties that the Holy Fire, could not be subjected to the gaze of a non-Zarathushti seemed to have any effect on him. The fact that permission for the same was granted by the Yemeni Govt. did not cut much ice with him.

He announced that he would be there, when the fire was being moved out and the Fire be kept ready for his inspection or else he would not give the permission to move it out. Imagine the state of the mind of the 4-5 Parsis left behind. The Parsis prayed to Ahura Mazda, to the Prophet Zarathushtra. They prayed to the Holy Fire itself.

At midnight there was a knock at the door. The Parsis looked at each other with dismay and anguish. So the commissioner had come to defile our Atash Padshah! they cried.

The door was opened with a heavy heart. Out on the steps stood a person and he had brought some news. The commissioner had just died most unexpectedly.

The Holy Fire was now safe from the eyes of those who need not gaze at it. Soon afterwards, in a convoy the Atash was taken to the airport.

The aircraft had just arrived from Bombay and the engines were not even switched off. No non-Zarathushti touched the aircraft. The aircraft had been sanctified with well water and taro. Cowasjee Dinshaw was aboard the same with the Head Priest of Udwada, Dastoor Kekobad Phirozjee who had provided a lot of religious advice. There were five other priests on board too, including a Godrej employee Mr. Rusy Mory. As soon as "Lhotse" landed, 2 mobeds holding British citizenship rushed to the Agiary. By then, Dastur Minocher Manecksha who had tended the fire for so many years, offered the last Boi in the Ushahin Geh. From there, the Atash was brought in its new container to the airport. A pavilion was built to ensure the sanctity of the Fire. The Yemeni Govt. had provided motorcycle escort to the entourage.

The holy fire was carried onto the aircraft. In a few minutes, the aircraft, the engines of which were never switched off was taxiing and was soon airborne.

History was made as live fire was carried in an aircraft, otherwise a very dangerous thing to do. As the aircraft took off, the Yemeni officials gave it a 21-gun salute, the sounds of which were heard all over Aden. The all-parsi crew as well as the other Parsi escorts kept on chanting prayers.

The mobeds who were accompanying the fire did the Padyab Kusti, Atash Nyaesh and other prayers. They often opened the box to offer sandalwood to ensure that the fire was still glowing and not died out. Opening the container and feeding the sandalwood at the height of 30,000 ft. was indeed a very dangerous thing to do as any flame escaping out could cause a major explosion in mid-air due to the highly pressurised cabin conditions. Yet every time they opened the box, they found the fire glowing softly and serenly, almost as if enjoying the unique journey.

After flying for 4 hrs., the aircraft landed at Santa Cruz airport, Bombay, at around 7 a.m.

The airport was chock-a-block with Parsis who had come to welcome the Holy Fire from across the sea. With due respects, the box was taken down the steps. A Pavi was built round the container and Yatha Ahu Vairyo was chanted. Dasturji touched the ground of Mother Earth in thanksgiving and with a prayer on his lips, opened the box. Lo and behold ! the fire that was resting silently upto now, leaped a few feet as if in sheer ecstasy.

The Flames of Faith danced and swirled as they came in touch with the atmosphere of Mother India. Here, the Atash Padshah felt secure and safe.

The Holy Fire was now taken to the Soonawalla Agiary at Mahim in a special luxury bus to be "rested" for a few hours. This was taken under police escort. The fire was offered Maachi and Boi for the Havan Geh and later in the Rapithwan Geh. The Mahim Agiary was packed with Parsi devotees who had come to pay their respects to the Padshah. Around 1.30 at noon, the Holy Fire was taken aboard the luxury bus and the second phase of the journey began - to the Adenwalla Agiary at Lonavala, where the atash would be finally enthroned.

A Pavi had been created round the bus and a chain attached to it to maintain contact with the earth. In an absolutely unprecedeted move, the Bombay to Pune Highway, was closed to all traffic upto Lonavala from Bombay. A motorcycle escort was once again provided by the Govt. of Maharashtra to the convoy. A number of Parsis followed the same in 8 buses plus many went along with their own cars (around 60-70 automobiles) and the route was lined with cheering Parsis, praying and expressing their gratitude.

On 14th Nov. 1976, Roj Behram, Mah Khordad, YZ 1346, the Atash Padshah of Aden arrived in Adenwalla Agiary at Lonavala.

With Maachi and boi ceremonies in the Ujireh Geh, the Atash Padshah was installed in the specially created sanctum sanctorum, next to the original fire of that Agiary. A Jashan for thanksgiving was conducted in the evening. The Agiary was full of devotees and the atmosphere full of devotion.

The expenses for the entire operation, which ran into lakhs of rupees was born by Mr. Cowasjee Dinshaw and his wife. When asked about the expenses, Mr. Dinshaw very modestly declined to mention the figure.

This true story is a story of hope, courage, devotion, faith and perseverance. It is an ideal example for the proverb "Where there is a will, there is a way". We must salute Mr. Cowasjee Dinshaw for his perseverance and patience in making his goal (dream) a reality.

(I found this article written by Pervez Daruwalla in Jam-e-Jamshed weekly of Sunday, 16th August 1998, a Parsi New Year Special, so interesting and engrossing, that I thought it best to reproduce it in his own words, with minor changes.)

JUST BOW BEFORE HIM - *Banaji Atashbehram*

This story has come down orally from generation to generation.

The incident took place some 50 to 70 yrs. ago.

A non-Parsi businessman residing near Charni Road, had great faith in Banaji Atashbehram, situated opposite the station. Every day, whilst going to work, he would offer a piece of sandalwood to the Padshah, by handing it over to some Parsi passer-by, or Parsi devotee, or helpers of the Atashbehram. He would then bow down reverentially outside the Fire-temple and leave for his work.

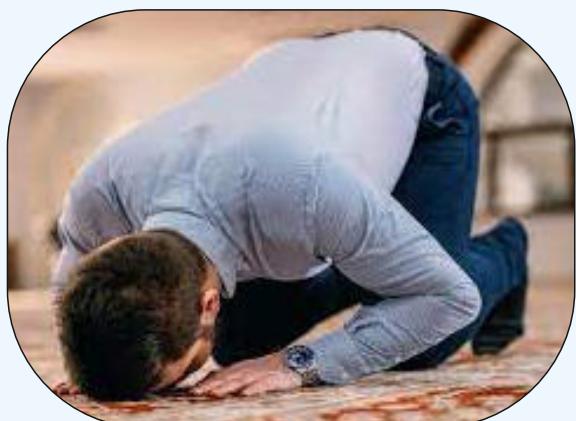
There came a time when he suffered loss in his business and high debts began to mount. Then came a stage when his creditors took him to court over non-payment of dues. The case came up in front of a Parsi Judge. The Judge gave him a few months more to repay his debts. However, the businessman's condition went from bad to worse, so there was no question of repaying the debts. When the days of grace were over, the Parsi judge gave him a final ultimatum of imprisonment if the debt was not paid within the next 2-3 days.

The days passed, with no hope for the businessman to pay his debt. On the eve of the deadline, he decided to end his life, rather than face the shame and humiliation of imprisonment. So, for the last time, he went to Banaji Atashbehram and offered a piece of sandalwood, bowed low and started walking towards Chowpatty beach, to end his life.

A thousand thoughts of fear and anxiety passed through his mind as he walked along the beach. A horse carriage pulled up next to him. Two men were sitting in it in a priestly garb. They came upto him and asked him what he was upto. The businessman gave evasive answers. It was then that one of the priests told him, "Go home my friend, avoid what you are doing. Your debts will be repaid by tomorrow."

He was taken aback for a while, but then realized that they must be spiritual beings, having known his mental and financial status. After pondering over their assurance of the debt being repaid, he, felt the need to believe them.

He turned round, went home, and



could hardly sleep all night. Early in the morning, he had a visitor-a man who owed him a huge sum of money, which he had not paid till date and which the businessman had written off as non-recoverable. He stood at the door with the entire amount in his hand.

The next day, he went to the court with the money, and in front of the Judge offered to pay his creditors what he owed. The Judge rebuked "So, you had the cash all along and now only the threat of imprisonment has brought out this cash to pay your creditors".

The businessman broke down and narrated the entire story in front of the court. The judge called a recess and took the businessman to his chamber to listen to his story and the story spread like wild fire.!

A DIVINE HAND'S ART WORK

The holy Desai Atashbehram was established at Navsari in 1768. It is the second oldest Fire-temple in India.

Devotees who visit this fire-temple over the years have witnessed a miracle unfolding before their eyes. Images are taking shape at different places on the marble walls of the kebla hall. So far, the images of the first Dasturan Dastur Meherjirana, Dastur Kukadaru and the holy bull, Varasyaji are clearly seen.



THE BLOCKING OF THE SUEZ CANAL AND SHREEJI IRANSHAH

This miracle of Iranshah took place when I was 13 years old and I was present when all this unfolded.

All the mobeds in Udwada were scared and concerned about the safety of Shreeji Iranshah because a very fierce battle was fought with heavy bombardment to liberate Daman from the Portugese. Udwada Athornan Anjuman called an emergency meeting which was well attended by all the stalwart priests like Dinshaji Unwalla, Nadarsha Moghal, Kekobad Sidhwa, Dinshah Cowasji Sidhwa, Jamshedji Andhyarujina, Ratanshah Katila, Faredoon Dastur, Behramji Cursetji Dastur, Jamshed Unwalla - to name a few.

Suggestions were invited on how to protect Iranshah from bombing, as the battle was raging fairly close to Iranshah. Building a protective structure around Iranshah, shifting Iranshah in an underground tunnel were suggested. Ervad Behramji Cursetji Dastur was quietly listening to all these impractical suggestions. After a while, he got up from his seat, roared like a lion and said, "Iranshah does not need mortal beings to protect It. In fact, it is Iranshah who protects us all and not vice-versa. Iranshah should not be shifted and the Udwada Anjuman should pass a resolution in this regard. Also let us resolve to offer a big maachi in Iranshah's honour, if this storm passes off peacefully".

Udwada Athornan Anjuman unanimously passed this resolution (tharav) and within 24 hours, President Nassar of Egypt blocked the Suez Canal and stopped the Portuguese ships, which were coming with reinforcements for the Portuguese army in Goa & Daman.

The Portuguese army in Daman and Goa had no option but to surrender to the Indian army.

This meant that Shreeji Iranshah was saved, and the Flame of Faith kept burning ever after.



(This article, written by Mr. Phiroz J. Dastur appeared in a Parsi newspaper which is reproduced here in his own words, with slight changes.)

MY DIVINE GIFT - MONAJAT



Being away from Mumbai, I missed all the family prayers for my dear departed parents.

Therefore I decided that every month, on "Daepdin" Roj which happened to be the day my dearest father had expired, I would offer prayers for my parents and in-laws, in the Bangalore Agiary.

On one such quiet and peaceful morning at 7-00 a.m. there was only our Dasturji Jamshed who was praying in the farthest corner of our fire temple and I sat in mute silence on an old bench with my little case of prayer books. This incident happened prior to the renovation of the fire temple.

My only child Shazad was almost 28, and I was waiting for him to settle down with a Zoroastrian girl and this worry was gnawing at me rather persistently.

As I had finished my prayers, I gathered all my little books into my plastic case, when I suddenly found a crisp, new white sheet of paper with writing in Gujarati.

No one had entered the Agiary, not even the old "Chasniwalla", Mr. Pastakia. Nor had I left my seat. So, where, when and how could I have received this sheet of paper?

As I am not fluent in Gujarati, I had great difficulty in reading it. As soon as Dasturji finished his prayers, I related the incident to him. After an initial surprise, he said it was an ancient hymn, "Monajat".

To say that I was confused and surprised would be an understatement. Dasturji said, "I have served the Holy Fire for so many many years and I have never had this sort of experience".

A few months down the line, my son shazad revealed his intention to marry a Zoroastrian girl from Mumbai. So perhaps this was God's answer to my fervent prayers.

(This article was written by Mrs. Armaity Dhalla, in the New Year edition of Parsi Times, dated 10th Aug. 2013, & reproduced here in her own words).



BANGALORE FIRE-TEMPLE

THE PAASBAANS OF ATASHBEHRAMS

In the year 1967, a terrible earthquake rocked Bombay at about 2-00 a.m. in the night. The electric power to the city was immediately shut off. A Zoroastrian staying near by walked over to Vatcha Gandhi Agiary at Huges Road, which was a minutes walk from his house. As he stood at the gate of the Agiary, he saw through the open window of the Agiary that at least 5-6 very tall Mobeds with sturdy looks were fervently praying with open arms, before the Holy fire. The Holy Fire was itself glowing in flames. The gentleman waited there a few minutes and left.

In the morning he tried to find out who they were, as the boyewala late Dinshaw Nalladaru, was the only mobed residing in the Agiary complex, during the night. The mystery as to who they were has not been solved since last 53 years!



In another case, which occurred at Dadiseth Atashbehram in Bombay, one Mr. Nakra who was the Prothonotary and Senior Master of Bombay High Court, staying in Dadiseth House in the Atashbehram complex and who had a habit of getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning, was doing his kusti prayers when he heard the boye of Ushen geh and bowed in reverence. Surprisingly, at 5-30 am. he heard the bells of boye ceremony again and on inquiry in the morning, the boyewala admitted that he had overslept and had not come to give the Ushen boye at 4 a.m. So, the question is : Who performed the boye ceremony at 4 a.m. as per the usual practice, which is again an unsolved mystery. It is thus obvious, that Higher spiritual entities are the Paasbaans of our fire-temples and guarding them constantly (I had a similar experience during my teens at the Wadiaji Fire temple in Bombay - an experience I will never forget).



(This was a whatsapp message - sender unknown)

THE DYNAMO OF SPIRITUAL ENERGY

Sixteen types of fires are needed to consecrate the fire of an Atashbehram status one of them being the fire of lightning.

Normally, for all other fire-temples the lightning fire is obtained, when lightning strikes a wood or a tree in the forest naturally. But the fire of lightning for Iranshah was brought down by a miraculous action of the Pious Dasturji Naryosang Dhaval by the recitation of Avesta Manthric prayers.

A European scholar who was present at the occasion, gives the name of the priest as Darab. He narrates that several members of the community, as well as non-parsis and foreigners were there to witness the miracle. The Dastur put dry sandalwood on a huge stone slab. Four pious mobeds were standing in 4 corners reciting holy prayers in a lofty voice and bowing reverently now and then. Standing in the south direction, Dastur Darab looked up to the sky, constantly reciting the magical mantra. In no time, clouds gathered, it turned dark, and a spark of lightning struck and ignited the sandalwood. The 4 pious mobeds gathered it and took it in a pre-constructed hut, for further purificatory ceremonies before being amalgamated with other 15 fires.

This is the difference between Iranshah and the rest 7 Abashbehrams and that is why Iranshah Atashbehram is revered the most.



Consecration Of Iranshah - Painting By Rustom Daboo

MIRACLE AT NARIELWALA AGIARY

This true story was narrated by Cursetji Patel (Editor of "Dini Avaz" Magazine) 30 years ago, during the summation of a lecture.

One afternoon, in the second Havan Geh, during Muktad time, an old Parsi gentleman visited the Narielwala Agiary for prayers. There was complete silence as the mobeds and the helpers had all gone to rest. All the behdins had also left after the morning Muktad prayers. There was no one in the Agiary, except an old Irani lady.

The gentleman sat, facing the atash Padshah and praying. The Irani lady sat near by.

Deep in prayer, in a peaceful serene atmosphere, the gentleman glanced up from his prayer book and saw a tall pious khorehmand (Lustrous aura) mobed in front of the atash afarganyu. He was completely astonished. The pious figure was so well built that the afarganyu could not be seen and it seemed as if the Afarganyu had turned into a pious mobed. The gentleman could not help asking the Irani lady, "Joyu ke"? (Did you see?) She replied, "Yes, I can see". She too was absolutely stunned. Suddenly they heard footsteps of someone approaching from the other room. Upon hearing this sound, the figure disappeared and the afarganyu could be seen again.

Cursetji Patel adds, that our fire-temples are not merely places of worship, but there are divine living, exalted energies residing in them. Many other miracles are associated with the Narielwala Agiary, and devotees have had their wishes granted in the Agiary.

Ervad Dosu Karkaria and his wife have personally experienced its miraculous abilities to grant wishes.

Er. Dosu, being from a poor family in Bharuch, left Bharuch to serve the fire at Narielwala Agiary in Mumbai. He was at the same time, desperately seeking an employment and this led him to an encounter with destiny.

One day, Er. Dosu had just completed performing the Boi, when a lady, Bacha Malegamwalla, out of the blue, suddenly asked him, "Mobed Saheb are you looking for a job?". Dosu eagerly replied in the affirmative, and next day, he met Bacha's son, Yezdi for an interview for a job in Central Bank of India. Dosu's life transformed with this job, and he feels this is a true testimony to this fire's miraculous manifestation.

But there's more. Within the hallowed halls of that Agiary, love blossomed as Yasmin and Dosu found each other. Yasmin was a regular visitor at the Agiary and Ervad Dosu used to be there to serve the fire. Their casual "Hi-hello" greetings transformed into a declaration of love and a happy marriage ensued, thanks to the blessings of the sacred Fire.

A young mother's fervent prayers brought forth another miracle earlier that year. Her son's sudden recovery after a long battle with an illness and poor health is testament to the fire's boundless compassion.

Amy Chhayela shares her story. "For five generations, my husband's family has been visiting this Agiary. Over here, simply whisper your deepest desires and watch them manifest. My late grandmother, Homayoon Attaie was a very pious lady who had great faith in this Agiary. One day, she was praying fervently when she saw the vision of prophet Zarathushtra above the holy fire. From that day on, my faith in this Agiary's fire has become very strong and I believe this fire is miraculous".

Jeroo Irani feels that even the well of the Agiary is a wishing well, and things that seem impossible will become possible with the blessings of the well.



(This article appeared in the Jam-e-Jamshed of Sunday April 21, 2024. The article "Narielwala Agiary" was written by Freny Daruwalla).

DIVINE HELP FOR THE DEVOTED & DUTY-CONSCIOUS

Mr. Homi Mistry and Mr. Savak Mistry were two brothers who were ardent devotees of Pak Anjuman Atashbehram at Mumbai. They worked in the office of the Newspaper "Blitz" as Deputy Editor and General Manager respectively.

It was routine for the brothers to visit the fire-temple late in Aivisathrum Geh. All the Boivalas knew them so well, that they had shown these brothers a secret place where they used to hide the key (behind our Prophet's frame) to the prayer hall.

The brothers would come late in the night, open the hall, say their prayers and then lie down on the wooden benches on the verandah, till Ushain Geh. They would get up and pray in the Ushain Geh and leave.

At around 9-30 to 10-00 p.m., the mobed would specially come again for them, perform kusti, wear Jama and take sukhad from them and offer it to the Padshahsaheb. Then the mobed would offer the chamach with Rakhia (holy ash) to them. This continued for many many years.

One day, Ervad Navroji Dastoor Meherjirana overslept. He got up at around 10.30 p.m. He went to the brothers for their sukhad. The brothers were surprised and perplexed. They told Ervad Saheb that he had already offered sukhad to the Padshah, a few moments back and he even offered them Rakhia. Ervad Saheb told them that he had overslept, and it was not he who had offered them Rakhia. The brothers argued that the priest looked exactly like him. The argument continued for some time before the Ervad Saheb could realize that it was some spiritual entity who had done this job for him.

Such stories, abound and we have heard that Sahyaji, i.e. the devotional priest's double or his astral body carries out his job, when the duty conscious priest sometimes oversleeps, and fails to perform the Boi.



WE NEED NO SECURITY.

Supporting the previous stories comes another story from Karani Agiary.

On the day, Aibara saheb became the Panthaky of Karani Agiary, after offering the buoi of Ushahin Gah at about 4 a.m. he was seated on the bench on the porch of the Agiary when he saw a vision. There is a huge tree on the lawns of Cusrow Baug from where he saw Shah Lohrasp walking above the ground and coming towards the Agiary. Despite the door of the Agiary being closed, Shah Lohrasp entered it, to the great astonishment of Aibara Saheb. Kukadaru Saheb, through inner voice informed, "Shah Lohrasp is the protector and overseer of Karani Agiary and the Atash Padshah and daily at 4-00 a.m. he visits the Agiary". Aibara Saheb was thus made aware of how such sacred buildings are protected in this world.



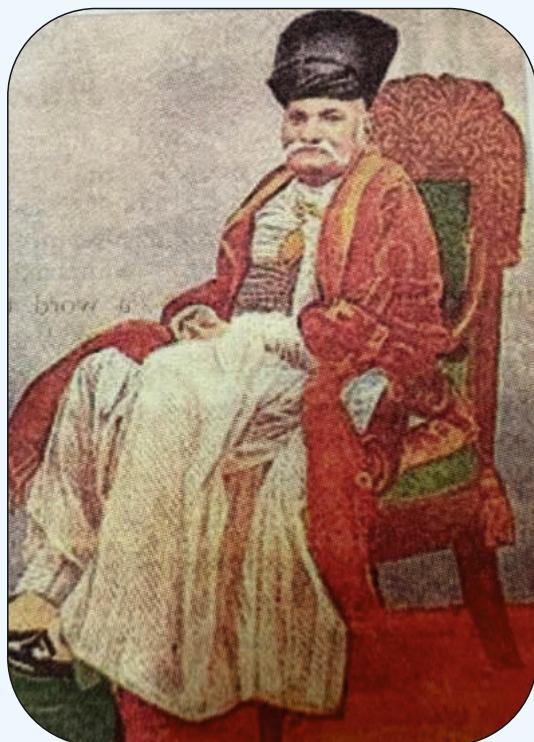
WISH GRANTED TO THE NOBLE HEART

The unmatched philanthropist Sir Jamshedjee Jejeebhoy, 1st Baronet had immense faith in his religion, its tenets and rituals. He was told that spiritually evolved Yaozdathregar Mobeds were capable of making the well water rise, when they poured back the well water used for the Yazashne ceremony. His heart was yearning to see that and he was constantly in search of such mobeds. But to his disappointment, he could find none in India.

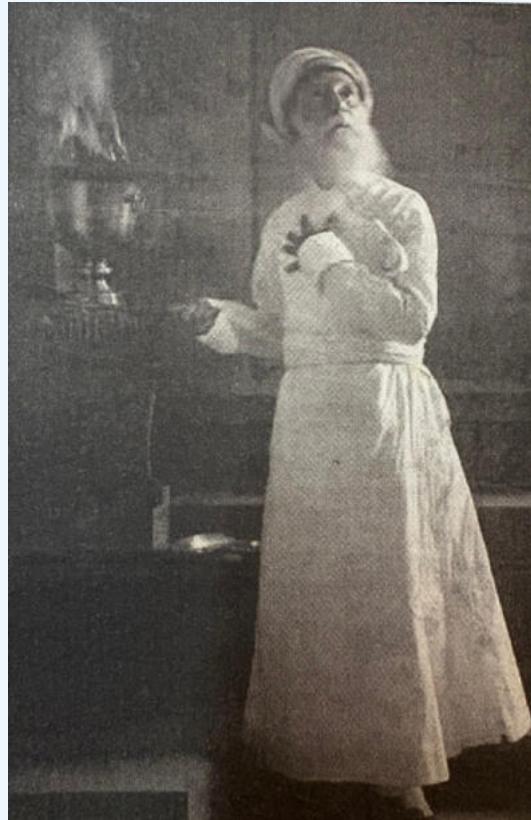
One day, unexpectedly, two Iranian mobeds showed up at his door, saying they were capable of performing the "miracle". They stayed there and performed the Yazashne ceremony in his family Agiary.

The water taken from the well before the ceremony was poured back into the well, and the well water rose up as if to welcome the consecrated water.

Who were these mobeds? Were they physical beings or spiritual beings, wanting to fulfill the wish of a noble human being?.



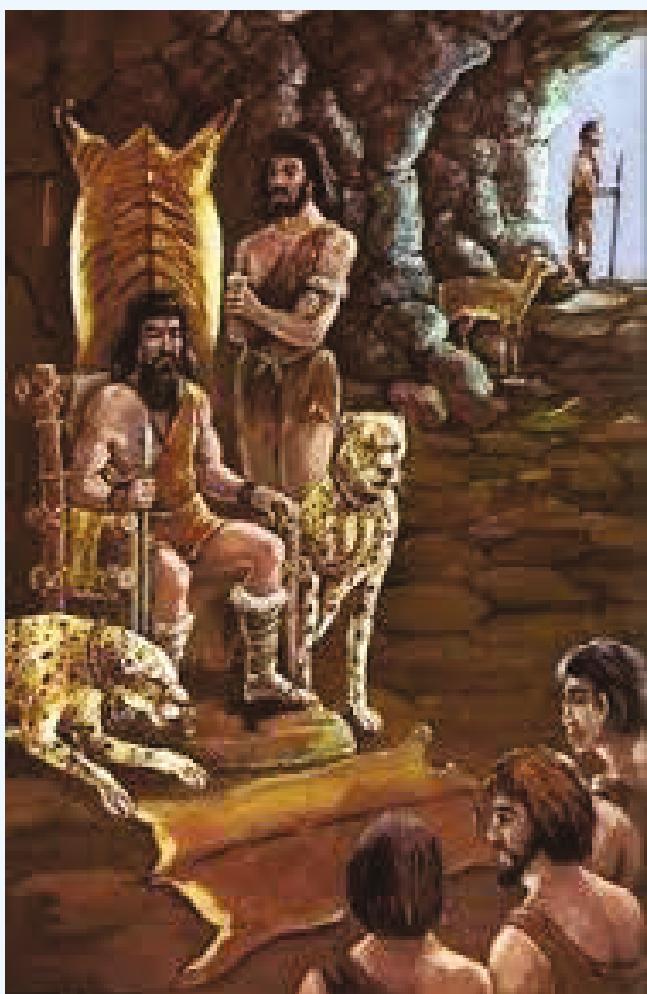
ENLIGHTENED
AND
SPIRITUALLY EVOLVED
ZOROASTRIAN SOULS



We begin with the evolved souls of pre-historic times, belonging to the first dynasty of Iran, the Peshdadian dynasty. The Kings of this dynasty may all be termed as "Dharmaraj" i.e. they were the spiritual as well as the corporeal heads of their subjects. Their contribution to the progress of the world, and welfare of their people was enormous - but since in this section, our aim is to bring out their spiritual aspect, we will let go of their material contributions.

GAYOMARD

Gayomard, also known as Kayomars is regarded as the first man on earth. According to some, the first king of Iran. He commanded great respect from all living creatures. Fellow beings and all living beings bowed their heads in reverence before him. According to Firdausi, the custom of bowing before the monarch, was learnt from animals, who bowed before Gayomard, since his face was full of lustre.



He was even said to understand the language of the animals and converse with them. It was for the first time that a human being commanded so much respect, awe and admiration from all creations and creatures around him.

In due time, he received a revelation from Ahura Mazda through Sarosh Yazad (spiritual being) and through these revelations he started the practice of monotheism, i.e. worship of one God. Thus started the Mazdayasni religion. Since he was the first one to listen to God's teachings, his Fravashi is remembered even today in our prayers.

Due to his immense contribution to mankind, he is referred to as Saoshyant, i.e. benefactor of mankind.

HOSHANG

After Kayomars, his grandson Hoshang became the King. He is called Paradhata, i.e. the first law-giver.

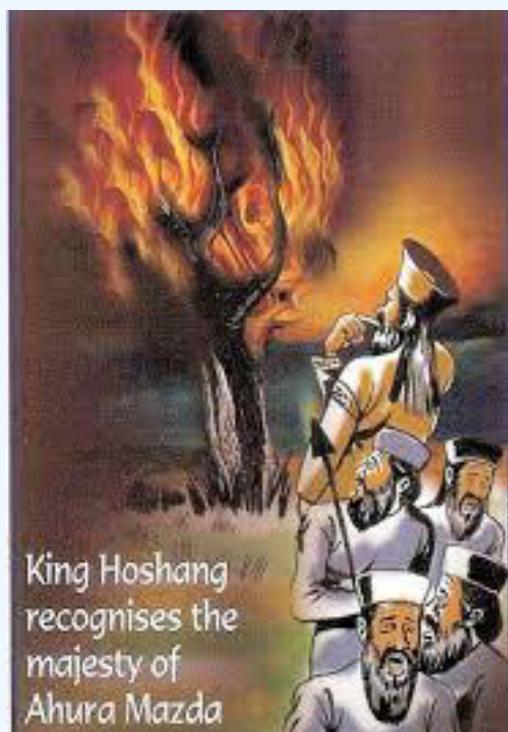
It is from this title that this royal dynasty got its name Peshdad.

His greatest contribution was the discovery of fire.

One day, King Hoshang went hunting along with his retinue. Suddenly a dragon appeared before them. The king and his men started throwing stones at him. Instead of hitting the animal, one of the stones hit another stone. The friction caused sparks to fly and ignited the dry grass and branches resulting in a huge fire.

Terrified, his men started running away. But king Hoshang instantly recognized the majesty of Ahura Mazda in this blaze and bowed down before it as the light of Ahura Mazda on this earth. At night the king and his subjects performed a Jashan around the fire with great enthusiasm. This Jashan is called Jashan-e-Sadeh and is celebrated even today.

He is also called Saoshyant. He was extremely wise and had many books to his credit, which were full of wisdom. The most famous book being "Javidan Kherad". Some have given him the status of a prophet.



TEHMURASP

Tehmurasp was the son of Hoshang who ascended the throne. He held court every day to give justice to his people. His main contribution was his fight against the devayasnus. He waged a war against them and captured two-thirds of the devayasnus who pleaded for their lives, promising to teach him the art of calligraphy, writing.

He is said to have put a saddle over Ahriman, the chief of the devayasnus and rode him like a horse rider for 30 years round the world. Due to his tight grip over the devayasnus, he was called "devband" which means, one who held the devayasnus captive.

Once, there was a great famine in his reign. Tehmurasp advised his people to have only one meal per day and distribute the rest of their food, amongst the poor who were dying of hunger, which mitigated the famine problem to a great extent.



JAMSHED

Jamshed was the most illustrious king of the Peshdadian dynasty. When his father, Vivangham performed the Hom ceremony, Jamshed was born to him. He was full of lustre and protector of his subjects.

He was a divinely inspired king. He had received the Kyanian Khoreh (Royal Glory) for his devotion and obedience to Ahura Mazda and commitment towards his royal duties. So devoted was he, that he was offered prophetship by Ahura Mazda, which was declined by him, as he did not consider himself fit for the job. He was then told to further God's creations and to further the progress of the material world, which he willingly accepted.

Enumerating the many inventions and discoveries to his credit, it would be no exaggeration to say that he was the world's greatest discoverer and inventor. But we will not be dealing with that topic here.

In his rule, there was no hunger, thirst, diseases, ill-health or death. People were free from vices, jealousy, anger, hatred. Father and 15 yrs. old son looked alike as there was no old age. There were neither extremes of cold or heat in his kingdom.

King Jamshed had a "Jam", a crystal bowl, famous in the world as Jam-e-Jamshed, in which he could see the past and the future.

Due to his piety, he was greatly favoured by God. God often guided and counselled him through Sarosh Yazad, the angel of intuition. The practice of tying the kusti round the waist was one such intuition. Sarosh Yazad told him that wearing the Kusti would protect him from evil influences, and would give him strength to fight against evil.

Once, Ahura Mazda guided him through Sarosh Yazad to prepare for ice-age, when the whole world would be submerged in ice. He was advised to take a pair of the best of each species in an enclosure and thus save man and all other creations from annihilation.



King Jamshed did as he was told. When the ice-age came to an end, and it was spring time, King Jamshed ascended the golden throne studded with jewels. The daevayasnis lifted the throne and carried him to far off places, whenever he desired. A Jashan was performed to mark his ascension to the throne which we celebrate to-day as Jamshedi Navroze.

After having ruled for 700 years, King Jamshed became proud of his achievements. He summoned the courtiers and his subjects and proclaimed, "You owe all your happiness to me. This world has turned into a heaven, because of me, so now on you should all worship me as God." As soon as he uttered these words, his Glory left him in the form of a bird. The people lost all respect for him and one by one started deserting him. He realized his mistake too late. From then on, he kept wandering like a fugitive. He was later identified, and mercilessly killed by Zohak.

FARIDUN

Faridun was the people's choice in overthrowing and ending the tyrannical rule of Zohak.

Faridun was born during the oppressive rule of Zohak. His father, Athawayan was killed by Zohak. Fearing for the life of her child, his wise mother Faranak took Faridun to the mountains and requested a farmer to take care of her baby. The farmer took him under his care, and Faridun grew up drinking the milk of the farmer's unique (it was multi-coloured like a peacock) cow named Purmae. When Faridun was 3 years old, Zohak found out his whereabouts and wanted to kill him. Before Zohak's men could reach there, Faranak took him from there, and entrusted her child to a saintly man on Albourz mountains. From this saint, he gained spiritual knowledge and powers, besides training in the art of warfare and administration. He stayed there till he was sixteen.

When Faridun went to fight against Zohak, with a large army, Sarosh Yazad, came to him, and taught him small prayers called Afsuns or Nirangs which would be useful to him to counter black magic and sorcery of Zohak.

With his nirangs, he could take any form, or change others into any form he wished.

When he went to fight against Zohak, he had his two brothers with him. One night, as they were all resting under a mountain, the two brothers became envious of his growing fame and decided to kill him, by rolling a huge boulder from the mountain top. The rumble of the boulder woke up Faridun who immediately chanted a nirang, which changed the course of the boulder. Faridun did not mention this incident to anyone in the morning, and forgave his two brothers.

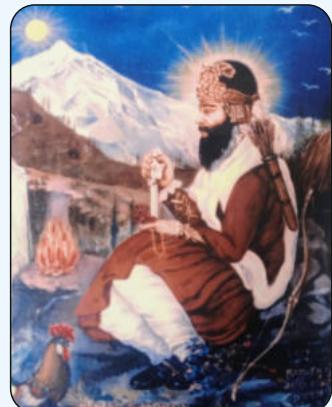
Faridun's army reached the Arvand (Tigris) river. Faridun requested the boatman Vifra-Navaza to ferry his army across the river. The boatman expressed his inability to do so as he was asked by King Zohak not to ferry anyone without his permission. Enraged, Faridun turned him into a bird. He flew for 3 days and nights and entreated Avan Yazad to help him out. Faridun brought him back in the human form after intervention by Avan Yazad.

Faridun chanted nirang to make the waters of the river part ways and they could cross the river safely on horseback.

Faridun arrived at Zohak's palace and was about to smite Zohak with his gurz when Sarosh Yazad intervened and advised Faridun not to kill him, but instead to secure him in heavy chains and imprison him in between two mountains.

Faridun was an erudite practitioner of all kinds of nirangs,. He is regarded as a healer, because of his many nirangs which were effective against all sorts of evil, black magic, ill-health, fever and for the many other problems such as finance, relationship etc. A Pahlavi nirang written in saffron water or red ink is placed on the entrance of the house, even today, on Roj Spendarmad, Mah Spendarmad to protect the household from every noxious creature as well as from all sorts of physical and spiritual evils. This nirang bears the name of Faridun as the protector. In the Vanant Yasht also, we pray that all evil powers would become powerless by the name, glory and lustre of Faridun of Athawayan.

In his name, glory and lustre is the strength to ward off physical, mental and spiritual illness, which is the reason why his nirangs are prayed even today by the faithful, who vouch by their efficacy of producing desired result.



ASHO NAR (HOLY & PIOUS) SIYAVAKHSH

King Kae Kaus was gifted with a saintly child of rare beauty perfect in shape and form.

Siyavakhsh grew up to be a very handsome youth. Of the many ladies in the harem, queen Sodabeh was so enamoured by him that she tried to bring him to her quarter. But when Siyavakhsh rejected all her advances, she put false allegations on him and created a great drama.

The king fed up of all these lies decided to put an end to it once and for all. Upon the advice of wise men, he first asked Sodabeh to undergo ordeal by fire, which she refused, but innocent Siyavakhsh immediately agreed.

On the appointed day hundred camel loads of wood was brought and arranged in two mountainous piles on either side, leaving a very narrow passage in between, through which the prince had to ride his horse, to prove his innocence.

The piles were ignited, which resulted in two towering infernos. Dressed in white and with prayers on his lips, Siyavakhsh rode his horse between the flaming woods.

The people of Iran had gathered there to witness the ordeal. They all loved Siyavakhsh and they were cursing Sodabeh for putting the young boy's life at risk. After a nail-biting suspense, Siyavakhsh emerged from the other side as fresh as a flower with not even a trace of char on him. There were shouts of joy, relief and happiness. King kae kaus was also greatly relieved and happy, as he loved his son.

After that Afrasiyab declared war on Iran. Siyavakhsh went with a huge army to fight against him. Due to some unexpected twist and turn-of events Siyavakhsh did not wage a war against Turan, but instead took refuge in Turan, the arch enemy of Iran and became a guest of Iran's greatest enemy Afrasiyab. He married Afrasiyab's daughter Ferangez. They were very happy and everything was working smoothly for Siyavakhsh. The cruel and jealous brother of Afrasiyab named Karsivarz could not bear to see that an outsider i.e. Siyavakhsh should enjoy such pomp and luxury in Turan. He poisoned the ears of Afrasiyab to the extent that the latter came with an army to kill Siyavakhsh, for no rhyme or reason. Just before that Siyavakhsh had foretold his wife Ferangez about how the future would unfold for them. He told his wife that he would be dragged on the streets and mercilessly killed, by severing his head from the body. The king would also treat his own pregnant daughter the same way, but then Prime Minister Piran would intervene and take her to his house, where she would give birth to a son, who should be named Kae Khushro. He would be the future King of Iran, who would avenge his father's death and wage a war against Turan, killing Afrasiyab and his brother Karsivarz.

What he predicted became reality. Every word of his came to pass.

Since he passed the ordeal by fire without being singed and since every word of his prediction came true, he is referred in our prayers as asho nar (pious) Siyavakhsh.



IMMORTAL KAE KHUSHRO

Pious Siyavakhsh was killed by King Afrasiyab of Turan and his brother Karsivarz.

Kae Khushro, the son of Siyavakhsh avenged the death of his father by killing both of them. In the death of Afrasiyab, Iran enjoyed peace and prosperity for a long time under Kae Khushro's rule, who became the king of Iran after his grandfather's death.



People were very happy under his rule and they loved their king. After sixty years of benevolent rule, Kae Khushro developed some weird anxiety. He felt that he had experienced all good that life had to offer and felt that, there was no meaning in living life any further. He knew that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. He felt that he should leave this world, lest the temptations of this world should make him indifferent to God, and lead him away from the righteous path, towards vices and greed. This thought obsessed his mind so much that one day, he ordered his officials and courtiers not to direct anybody to him for work, and retired into a life of prayers and meditation. He discarded the royal robe, crown and jewellery and started wearing white robe (Jama). There were no court proceedings as he spent week after week in prayers. The courtiers, warriors and paladins were all worried about this sudden change in the king's attitude.

After some time, the king came to sit on the throne and allowed everyone to meet him. Senior paladins asked him, if they were the cause of his changed behaviour. Had they displeased him in any way? The king replied that nobody was responsible for his behaviour, but that he had a secret desire, which he wanted to be fulfilled. He then again issued orders not to be disturbed and again went into seclusion. Time passed, but Kae Khushro did not return to court. Gudarz, one of the senior paladins felt it was a serious matter and something had to be done about it. He called Zal and Rustam from Zabulistan, as he felt that they were the only ones, who could talk to him and bring him back to his senses.

On the eighth day, the king again summoned the court. Everyone was happy and offered to help him out in any way. But the king politely told them that they would be of no help in achieving his secret desire and once again retired to his prayer place.

This time his seclusion lasted for five weeks, as he wanted to speed up the fulfillment of his desire. He was praying day and night and was not sleeping. One night, however he fell asleep and Sarosh Yazad's voice was heard telling him, "Oh! worthy king, your persistence has paid. Your secret desire of getting a place next to God has been granted. Your time of death has not come, but for your desire to be fulfilled, you will now leave this world. Make preparations for that. Give your wealth and possessions to the needy and deserving and to all those, who sacrificed a great deal to make your life happier. Choose as your successor, the just and noble warrior Lohrasp".

The king got up from his place of worship. He was drenched in perspiration, thanked God immensely, and started making preparations as suggested by Sarosh Yazad.

When Zal and Rustam came to talk to him, he told them that he had decided to relinquish not only his kingdom but also the world. Zal was shocked at his decision and told the king that it would bring great trouble to the country of Iran; The king explained to them, his plans in great detail, which satisfied them.

All his subjects gathered in a huge open field to hear the last will and testament of their dear king. A pall of gloom surrounded the gathering when the king announced his decision to renounce the world. He asked his people to enjoy themselves for 7 days. On the eighth day, he sat on the throne wearing a white robe, without crown or scepter. He nominated Gudarz as the Trustee of his treasures, and advised him, to spend them wisely for public utility works, like building and repairs and also for helping orphans, widows and aged people. Some amount had to be set aside for the maintenance of fire temples.

He gave his personal possessions to his warriors. He then asked everyone present if they had any desire or wish to be fulfilled before his farewell. His touching words brought tears in the eyes of one and all. Many paladins asked for royal attestations for the land they were ruling. Kae Khushro granted their wish.

The king then went to Lohrasp, placed the crown on his head and declared him the King of Iran.

Naturally, this infuriated senior paladins who had served generations of Iranian kings. They questioned "How come Lohrasp, a nascent warrior surpass the rights of all seniors?"

Kae Khushro replied that Lohrasp had Kyanian lineage and is selected for his religiosity, divinity, generosity and many other noble qualities. Besides, he was the chosen one by Sarosh Yazad himself.

When Zal and others heard this, they apologised and accepted Lohrasp as their king.

Having satisfactorily completed all his worldly duties, the king started walking towards the forest with his faithful paladins, Zal, Rustom, Giev, Gudurz, Bizan, Gastaham, Fariburz and Toos. They were followed by priests, and thousands of his subjects, including women and children.

After resting there for a week, the king requested the subjects to return as the road ahead was a sandy desert, devoid of water and vegetation. Zal, Rustom and Gudarz stayed back; the other five warriors insisted on accompanying him.

They journeyed for a day more and rested near a stream. They drank some water, after which the king told them to rest there and chat with him, as this would be their last meeting, together- as early the next morning, he will disappear from human sight forever to meet Sarosh Yazad. He warned them to leave the place in the morning, as a severe snowstorm would ensue, which would make it impossible for them to return home. He even told them not to be deceived by the fine weather as snowstorm was bound to follow. They all went to sleep at night. At midnight, the king got up, washed his body with the stream water, and started praying Zend Avesta Manthras.

The next morning, when the sun rose, Kae Khushro just disappeared. The warriors searched everywhere but could find no trace of him or his foot prints. Exhausted, they returned back to the stream. The mature Fariburz reminded them about the approaching snowstorm. But they all shrugged off his warning as they felt that the weather was warm and the sky clear. They ate some food and went off to sleep. A sudden, severe snowstorm started. They found themselves helpless before nature's fury and were all buried alive, in the snow.

Zal, Rustom waited at the mountain for 7 days for their return, but none came back. A search party brought their dead bodies to Iran, where they were laid to rest in the Dakhma.

Since Kae Khushro padshah did not die a natural death, but simply disappeared, he is considered immortal and his name is still taken by the faithful in Dua Tandarosti (prayer for health). He will reappear to help Saoshyant in his task of resurrection and Frashokereti i.e. rejuvenation.

SHAH LOHRASP

Kae Khushro padshah chose Lohrasp, an ordinary almost unknown soldier, to succeed him as the king of Iran.

Shah Lohrasp is said to have ruled wisely and righteously for 120 years, and established many fire temples.

He abdicated his throne in favour of his son Gushtasp (Vishtasp). He went to Navbahar Atashkadeh which was at that time, as sacred for the Zoroastrians as Mecca is for the Muslims today. He gave up all worldly treasures and pleasures and distanced himself from society. He remained in seclusion, absorbed in meditation and prayers for 30 long years.



We find his picture in all our fire-temples and homes. He is pictured praying before the fire with his right hand lifted in prayer and his left hand resting on a bow. He had mastered the science of projecting his astral body out of his physical body at will. So his picture always shows his astral body hovering in space in front of the sun. He is known as Saheb-e-Mithra (Master over thought forces). Therefore, we are advised that if any evil thought passes through our mind, we should recite one Ashem Vohu and then recite "Saheb-e-mithra, Kae Lohrasp Bin-Arvand". When in trouble, his picture can be brought to mind to experience peace and tranquility.

ZARATHUSHTRA

Most of us know the story of our dear prophet Zarathushtra and the many miracles associated with him. Here, I enumerate his many miracles in a very concise way.

Durasarub, who practised black magic and sorcery realized that in the birth of Zarathushtra, his days were numbered. He moved heaven and earth to kill baby Zarathushtra. He abducted baby Zarathushtra and placed him in a lane, which was frequented by wild horses and cows, being pretty sure, he would be crushed under their legs. But the leader of both the herds protected him under his four legs and no harm came to him. He put him in the wolf's den, but the baby met with the same fate. Since, even wild animals obey the Will of God, they protected him from harm, as they knew that it was the Will of God that Zarathushtra would be the messenger of God. Enraged by his failures, he put the baby on a pile of burning wood, which turned into a bed of flowers and no harm came to the child.

He then tried to kill the child with a dagger, but his hand got paralysed and writhing in pain, he left.

When Zarathushtra went to the court of King Vishtasp to propagate his religion. he carried with him 3 things 1) A Sarv plant

2) Fire named Adar Burzin Meher

3) The holy book Avesta.

On every leaf of the Sarv plant was a message. "Vishtasp, accept the religion of Zarathushtra." It was planted outside his palace 2) Fire named Adar-Burzin Meher needed no fuel to burn and could not be extinguished by water or any other means. It did not burn the hands of those who handled it. 3) The holy book Avesta-Zarathushtra declared that nothing exists in the universe which is not there in the Avesta.

Zarathushtra's wisdom was tested by great and wise men of the world, but he answered all their questions even before they opened their mouth to question.

Once, Zarathushtra performed the Baj ceremony in which he consecrated a juice, a flower, milk and pomegranate along with the "Dron"(darun). After the ceremony, he gave these 4 things to 4 people which are listed below:

- 1) King Vishtasp - Vishtasp was given the juice to drink, after which he could "see" his place in the other world after death.



2) Dastur Peshotan - Peshotan was the son of King Vishtasp who was given the consecrated milk to drink, by which he became immortal. It is said that he lives in a secret monastery on Mount Alburz. It is predicted that he would reappear in future with his 151 disciples to help Shah Varzavand to win the war, with his piety and prayers.



3) Vazir Jamasp - Jamasp was the prime minister in the court of King Vishtasp. He was very wise, learned, intelligent and, righteous; therefore he was called, "De Jamasp". He was also called, "Hakim Jamasp" He was expert in astrology and astronomy. He was made to smell a flower from the Baj ceremony, which made him clairvoyant. He could see the past, present and future. His predictions have been penned down in a book called "Gohare Jamasp" - "the Gems of Jamasp". He had greatly helped Zarathushtra in spreading his religion.

4) Asfandiyan was the son of king Vishtasp who was made to eat the pomegranate, by which he became invincible. His body became immune from blows of any weapon.

ARDAVIRAF

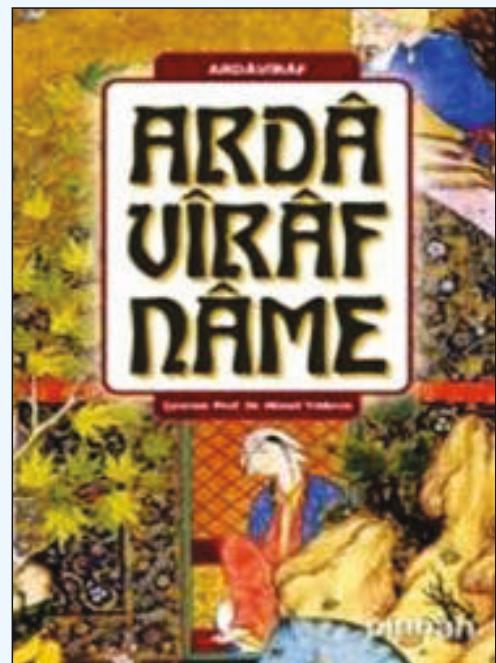
Aradae Viraf was a pious, holy Zoroastrian yogi, ever immersed in prayers. Zoroastrian religion faced degradation and downfall during the reign of Alexander. The great king of Iran, Ardeshir Babakan, decided to revive the Zoroastrian religion back to its pristine glory and purity. For that Herculean task, he called a meeting of 40,000 priests from his kingdom. Out of them, 4000 were selected. Out of 4000, many were weaned out and 400 were further selected. The third round saw 40 being picked up. In the fourth round 33 were eliminated and 7 were chosen. Out of the 7, 3 were selected, and out of the 3, only one, i.e. Ardashir was found most capable of reviving the Zoroastrian faith.

On the appointed day, Ardashir entered the "Adar Frohaba" fire-temple and sat on the "hindola" after an ablution. He performed the Baj ceremony and prayed to the departed souls and Fravashis. At each of the words, Humata, Hukhata, Hvarashta, he took a sip of Hom-jiwam mix. Completing the Baj, he slept off peacefully for 7 days. His soul separated from his body to take stock of the world above. The 40,000 priests sat round his body constantly praying. Under the guidance and help of Behman and Ardibehsht Ameshaspands and Adar and Sarosh Yazad, he came to know the workings of the spiritual world. On the eighth day, he woke up from his sleep and narrated his experiences to the people. He talked of heaven, hell and Hamestegan, of the people who are consigned to these places and also explained why they were there.

This miracle, the impact of his explanation on Ahura Mazda's justice greatly influenced the Zoroastrians and their faith in their religion was renewed.

He wrote a book, "Aradae Virafnama" wherein he gave a detail description of heaven and hell. He made it very clear to the people that they will get their reward (heaven) or punishment (hell) according to their good or bad deeds in this world. So, it is in our own interest to follow the teachings and tenets of our religion and observe the law of purity in every sphere of our life. This law applies to kings and paupers equally. So, let, memories of our good deeds be our food for the final journey upwards.

This book was widely acclaimed and appreciated by the western world.



DASTUR TANSAR

During the reign of the Ashkanian dynasty, great rot had seeped in the Zoroastrian religion, in the form of idol-worship.

The great king Ardeshir Babakan of the Sassanian dynasty was determined to bring back the glory and pristine purity of the Zoroastrian religion.

He assigned the task to Dastur Tansar. He collected the 21 volumes (nasks) of Avestan texts mainly from the memory of priests. This recompilation gave a new life to the religion and rituals. This magnum opus of Dastur Tansar was highly extolled by all as magnificent and memorable.

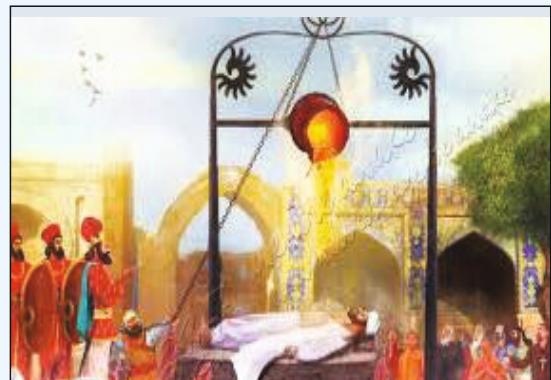


ADARBAD MARESPAND

In Pahlavi language, his name appears as Atarepat Marespandan. He was in Iran in the 4th century B.C. during the reign of "Hormuzd Shapur". His birth was foretold by our prophet Zarathushtra. According to the book "Dabestan" his father's lineage was from Zarathushtra and mother's lineage from King Gushtasp.

He was born with spiritual gifts worthy of a prophet. During his time, Zoroastrians had lost faith in their religion and were practising devious rituals of other religions.

To reestablish their faith in the Zoroastrian religion, he poured nine mounds of molten bronze on his bare chest, in front of a huge gathering. He thus proved the greatness of the Zoroastrian religion and removed doubts about its efficacy from the minds of the Zoroastrians.



Through his eloquent lectures and many miracles, he convinced the people of the loftiness of their religion and succeeded in making them staunch Zoroastrians.

For his untiring efforts and invaluable service to the Zoroastrian religion, Dastur Dastur Adarbad Marespand is remembered along with Ardesir Babakan in the Pazend prayer, "Afrine Panji"

He is placed amongst the ranks of highly evolved and spiritual souls who possessed Yazatic supernatural powers.

He had given invaluable advice to his son "Zarthosht" in Pahlavi called "Anderje Atarepat Marespand". He had composed prayers in Pahlavi which we recite today; namely "Patet Pashemani", "Dua nam Setayashni", "Afrine Ghamban" and many more.

A CUT ABOVE THE REST - FIRST DASTUR MEHERJIRANA OF NAVSARI

The first Dastur Meherjirana was the undisputed spiritual leader of the Parsi community in India during the sixteenth century. He was renowned and respected by all other communities on account of his piety, vast knowledge and spiritual powers.

Dastur Meherji was born in a priestly family of Navsari in 1514 A.D. His father's name was Rana Jesung, and mother's name was Rani. India at that time was under the Mughals and Akbar, the Mughal king ruled over a vast empire and was one of the greatest kings of India. He was a wise, tolerant and just king whose court was adorned with wisest men in their respective fields. He had Abul Fazal as the prime minister, Badauni, the historian, Raja Todarmal, Birbal and Tansen.

Akbar laid siege to Surat in 1573 A.D. During the war, Akbar used to invite scholars and religious leaders. The officials at Surat recommended the name of "Mahiyar Rana Parsi", as Dastur Meherji was known to them. Meherji with his son Kaikobad first met Akbar at Kankarwadi at Surat. Akbar asked many religious questions, and pleased with Meherji's answers invited him to Agra.

Around 1577-78. A.D. Akbar held a conference of wise, knowledgeable learned men of all communities. Religious books were read out. Heads of all religions threw light on the tenets of their religions. After studying the essence of each religion he founded the new religion Din-e-Ilahi.

Meherjirana represented the Zoroastrian religion. He impressed all, by his personality, character and eloquence. Akbar was extremely impressed by his brilliant knowledge. At the court, none could equal him in discussion or arguments. Mr. Vincent A. Smith, in his historical book, "Akbar - The Great Mogul 1542 - 1605" Comments: "Akbar probably found more personal satisfaction, in Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Parsees than in any other of the numerous religions, examined by him so critically in his odd detached manner."



The Dastur taught him, the tenets and rituals of his religion, laying great stress above all things on reverencing the sun and fire.

A sacred fire, prepared according to Parsi rules was started in the palace and prime minister, Abul Fazal was given the charge to see that it was never extinguished. Two years later in 1582, Akbar adopted the Zoroastrian calendar for official purposes throughout India. He performed 14 Jashans per year which were declared 14 public holidays.

Akbar was impressed by the religion which had purity as its foundation and good thoughts, words and deeds as its 3 founding pillars.

Before going to the Court, the emperor publicly prostrated himself before the sun. When the lamps were lighted in the evening, the whole court was required to rise respectfully. He celebrated Jamshedi Navroze with pomp and gaiety. He weighed himself against coins and distributed them amongst the poor on that day.



Once, a Jain muni, named Hirvijay Suri called "Jagatguru" claimed that he would make two suns shine in the sky. The magician, with certain spells, had launched a metal plate in the sky. The sun's light made it shine like another sun. He challenged all men in the kingdom to respond to this "miracle". Everyone failed. Lastly, Meherjirana came, performed his kusti and started his prayers. The plate came crashing down, amazing the whole court. This "miracle" made the Dastur famous throughout India. Inspired by him, the famous musician Tansen composed a song "Elahoo Parsee Padhe Sho Kabool" (by God, the prayers of Parsees are accepted) In the same song, he describes Meherji as "Lambi lambi dahadee Shah Meheryar, tere mukh par barshat noor" (Shah Meheriyar your beard is long and your face has immense lustre).

Tansen was followed by Mangal, Gosalkhan, the famous bards of the Delhi court, in showering praises on Meherji. This incident became so sensational, that even poets and musicians of sister communities wrote poems on him.

In appreciation of his impressive religious service, Akbar granted him 200 vighas of land at Gelkhari near Navasari. This is known as Madad-e-maash.

The career of Meherjirana was a landmark in the history of the Parsis because it was he who brought their forgotten religion into prominence in all its spiritual glory and splendour and had their name respected throughout Hindustan. For his yeomen service to the Parsi community, the Navsari priests, in 1579, signed a document, acknowledging Meherjirana as their leader and declaring that all religious ceremonies would henceforth be performed only after obtaining his permission. He was enthroned as high priest which was the origin of "gaadi" (seat) of high priest, which continues till today.

I would like to narrate another miracle of Dastur Meherjirana.

Once, when he was in Delhi, a nawab of Agra, by the name Zulfikarkhan approached him with his problem. He said that he had built a big haveli in Delhi, but it remained unoccupied, since it was haunted. He said whoever went inside came out as a corpse the next day. He requested Meherji to do something about it. Meherji asked him why he was not taking help from maulvis and heads of other communities. The nawab replied, "Why go for divas, when I can get the sun? Why run after fake magicians, when I can get hold of "Man of God",? Meherji asked him to show his haveli.

The nawab replied that he was afraid even to take its name. Mehreji said, "In that, case, I will go alone and stay there in the night". With prayers on his lips, he sprinkled "taro" (bull's urine) in the house. He lighted the fire and offering sandalwood to it, he prayed the whole night.

Having passed a sleepless night, the nawab got up early in the morning and headed towards the haveli, apprehensively.

When he came very near, he was greeted by Dasturji, standing at the entrance with a smile on his face. Relieved beyond words, the nawab's joy knew no bounds. Meherji assured him that his house was now completely purified and free from all evil elements.

The nawab prostrated at his feet and offered him gifts. But Meherji politely refused them and asked him to distribute it amongst the poor.

Such enlightened souls continue to be associated with miracles even after their death. At the Navsari Atashbehram, a natural formation of Dastur Meherjirana is taking place on the marble slab of the wall facing the holy fire.

DASTUR KUKADARU

Jamshed Sohrab Kukadaru, was born on 9th May 1931, Roj Jamyad, Mah Avan at Surat.

When he came from Surat to Bombay, he was made panthaki of Kapawalla Agiary at Nizam Street, Baharkot.

Kukadaru Saheb led a simple life, of basic needs. He was a vegetarian. He ate only once a day. His diet consisted of Khichdi and ghee. The Khichdi (rice) was prepared by exposing the vessel of rice to the sun. Reciting some mantras, the rice got cooked. He had the welfare of mankind at heart. He spent his entire life in relieving the people of their problems and illnesses by giving them nirangs to pray, which definitely provided the desired effect. Thus he provided immeasurable relief to thousands of Zoroastrians but never accepted gift from anyone.



He had many miracles to his credit. We shall enumerate, a few of them.

One day, he was praying, when a marriage procession (barat) passed nearby. He called the helper of the Atashbehram and told him to immediately go to them, and tell them to halt there and there for 1 hour for their safety. The helper conveyed the message to the baratis, but they shrugged off his advice, saying they had seen the muhrat (auspicious time), and started. They proceeded further and in no time the bridegroom's horse stumbled, the bridegroom fell on the ground and met an instant death. The baratis then came to Dasturji and repented. This detail was published in the newspaper of that time.

Mr. Jehangir Karkaria, a famous mathematician of Bombay and a wise teacher of Bharda New High School, himself narrated his childhood experience. When Jehangir was 3 years old, he suffered from jaundice, which had taken a serious turn, threatening his life. The doctors had declared that they could do nothing more about it, and had given up hopes. But his religious grandmother did not lose hope and with tears in her eyes, approached Kukadaru Saheb. She requested him to cure her child. Dasturji asked her to bring the child at a particular time in the evening. Crest fallen, the lady expressed her anxiety saying anything may happen by that time. Dasturji assured her that nothing would happen. She brought the child back at the appointed time. Kukadaru Saheb took her to the room, where higher liturgical ceremonies are held and asked her to sit down with the child in her lap. He sat opposite to her and placed a copper vessel filled with water in between them. He began his prayers and after some time, started giving "passes" with his hand. As he continued with this exercise, the old lady noticed the clean water turning yellow. When

the water turned dark yellow, the child came out of his unconscious state, to the immense joy of the grandmother. She thanked Dasturji profusely and bowed reverently. Dasturji suggested some precautions to be taken and sent them away with blessings.

He had made many accurate predictions which came to pass.

I now mention a miracle, which proved that he was an alchemist. Anjuman Atashbehram was being built at Dhobhitalao. But the trustees were short of Rs. 10,000/-. They were in a fix as where to get the amount from. Dastur Jamaspasa approached Kukadaru saheb with the dilemma. Kukadaru saheb said, "You know I am a muflis (poor). From where will I get Rs. 10,000/- ?" Jamaspasa insisted on getting the amount, and asked saheb how much amount he should write beside his name. "Write what you wish". So Jamaspasa wrote Rs. 10,000 beside his name.

The next day, some volunteers went to him to get the amount. Dasturji asked them to come the next day at 5 p.m. in the evening with a brick. "That brick should not be new. It



should be a used one fallen on the roadside". The next day, early in the morning, all the boys went out in search of a used brick. Afternoon followed morning, and evening followed afternoon, but they could not find a brick. One of the boys who doubted Kukadaru saheb's powers stumbled and fell. He got up with a support. That, "support" was an old brick! They quickly headed towards the Agiary. They showed the brick to Kukadaru saheb, who instructed them to put it in the pavi in the next room and asked them to come the next day at 5 p.m. to fetch the amount.

The next day, when they went, Kukadaru saheb asked them to take away whatever they found in the next room. When they went into the next room, they were spell bound to see a gold brick instead of the old brick!. Some sceptics felt that he must have replaced the old brick with the gold one. But the gold brick bore the company's stamp which was on the old brick. The doubting Thomas, also bowed before saheb asking for forgiveness. Thanking Kukadaru saheb profusely, they went to get the gold brick weighed. The value of the gold brick turned out to be Rs. 10,000/- not one rupee more, not one rupee less.

Out of these Rs. 10,000/- the Anjuman Atashbehram hall was constructed, and was named Dasturji Jamshedji Sohrabji Kukadaru Hall. Kukadaru Saheb's portrait hangs in this hall even to-day.

Due to these miracles, Kukadaru saheb's name and fame spread in the Parsi community in India and abroad. That is why we see his portrait in every Parsi household and in all our fire-temples across India.

Saheb was not a Dastur during his life time. But when he passed away, Dastur Jamaspasa declared during his Uthamna ceremony, that his name should not be recited as "Ervad Jamshed, Ervad Sohrab". but as "Dastur Jamshed, Ervad Sohrab", since he was fit for the honour, as a great spiritual saint of the community.

A natural formation of his image is taking form on the wall of the hall outside the kebla of Navsari Atashbehram.

For more of his miracles after his death, kindly read the next story of Ervad Nadarsha Navroji Aibara.

LIKE MASTER LIKE DISCIPLE ERVAD NADARSHA NAVROJI AIBARA

Nadarsha was born in 1933. After marriage to Nergishmai, they continued residing in their parents' home. They felt space crunch as their family grew bigger. At that time, the Sodawaterwalla Agiary at Marine Lines needed a Panthaky, and they were offering a residence as well. He took up this offer for a salary of Rs. 100/-

One day, Nadarsha went to offer midnight boi. It was his custom to pay obeisance to the huge portrait of Kukadaru saheb, (It is there even to-day outside the Kebla, to the left). Suddenly, he heard a voice coming out of the portrait and saw the lips moving. He recognised the voice immediately as the one he had been hearing within himself, as "Ya Ahu" since his childhood. He was 40 years old when this incident happened.

Nadarsha put this powerful incident aside and continued with his busy life. After a few days, when he was offering Ushhen Geh boi (mid-night) he saw a brilliant light coming at him from Saheb's portrait. The light was so bright that he could barely look at it. The light engulfed him fully. From that day, he felt so empowered as though his strength had been doubled. He was given a nirang by Kukadaru saheb to distribute among people in distress and suffering, with instructions that he had to tell the people that they were Kukadaru saheb's nirang. Nadarsha was perplexed, and asked Kukadaru saheb, "Who is going to come for the nirang and who will believe me?." He did not give much importance to it.

Next day, after offering the Havan (morning) Geh boi, when he came out, he was surprised to see 7 people at 7 a.m. sitting in the front hall of the Agiary. He had never before seen so many people at 7-00 a.m. at the Agiary. He approached them and asked them the reason for their coming. In one voice they proclaimed, "We have come to take Kukadaru saheb's nirang from you." Kukadaru's voice from within Nadarsha said, "Now you are convinced"!

Ervad Nadarsha's life took a new turn from that day onwards.

He distributed the nirang which Kukadaru saheb had dictated him to all 7 on a piece of paper and told them to pray it for 40 days, observing the laws of purity, and to report to him on the 41st day. Amongst the seven, one had cancer, another had suffered loss in business and a lady who failed to conceive. The surprising part was that although the 7 had 7 different problems, the nirang given by saheb was the same.

All 7 came on 41st day. The cancer patient narrated, "A great miracle has taken place in my life. My cancer has vanished, thanks to Kukadaru saheb's nirang. The doctor was



amazed that prayers had such immense power to erase cancer, with no trace of cancer in the report".

One day, when this doctor, passed by the Sodawaterwalla Agiary, he personally met Aibara Saheb and bowing in reverence told him, "I am a cancer specialist, but you are God's greatest doctor".

The lady conceived within 40 days of the prayer. The third gentleman was happy that his business had turned profitable by the nirang.

In order to obtain mastery over all the nirangs, saheb directed Nadarsha to recite these nirangs in Ushahin Gah 125,000 times in 40 days, and to observe abstinence for those 40 days. In that case, how many times to recite each nirang daily? Saheb directed him to recite each nirang daily for 3,125 times. But when Aibara saheb started reciting, it was not easy for him to keep the count, but then, when he reached the count of 3,125, the voice within would inform him, "Now stop".

In the beginning, Nadarsha wrote each nirang and distributed them. But as more and more people came to him, it was not possible for him to write so many nirangs. He had no time and he was experiencing fatigue. The only solution was to cyclostyle them. But Aibara Saheb could not get them done out of his meagre income.

Then he experienced a third miracle. One day, after the Ushahin Gah prayers, he found 3 crisp notes of Rs. 100/- each on the marble slab below the afarganyu. The inner voice told him, "this amount is to be used to cyclostyle the nirangs". He kept getting this amount, when the pages were over. Later, many Parsis gave him financial help for this activity.

After some time, the Agiary trustees disapproved of his activity. But Aibara Saheb wanted to continue this noble work, so he left the Sodawaterwalla Agiary Panthak in 1979.

Very soon, the trustees of N.H. Karani Agiary at Cusrow Baug offered him the Panthak. The Trustee, Mrs. Roda Karani encouraged him in continuing his noble work, and other trustees supported him. The most splendid, sacred, and successful phase of Aibara Saheb's life, unfolded in the Karani Agiary.

The miracle and cures associated with his nirangs would occupy a whole book. Here I would enumerate just a few.

When he was at Sodawaterwalla Agiary, a Parsi came to him saying "My child is in serious condition at the hospital. Doctors have given up all hopes. Please come with me to the hospital. But the inner voice told him not to go to the hospital but instead to give him Nirang and a rose out of the few roses, placed before his portrait. He was instructed to let the child eat some petals. With great difficulty, the father made the child eat a little, as the child was not even opening his eyes. Next day, the child's condition improved slightly. He was made to eat all petals. The day after that, the improvement was remarkable enough to baffle the doctors. Eight days later, the child was sent home. Before coming home from the hospital, the child told his father, "After you fed me rose petals on first day, a Dasturji appeared before me and recited a prayer. The next day, I became much better. I want to

meet this Dasturji". The father took the child to Aibara Saheb and asked the child if he had seen this Dasturji. The child replied, "No. He had a beard". Hearing this, Aibara Saheb showed the child, the portrait of Kukadaru saheb. Seeing this, the child exclaimed, "Yes it was this very Dasturji, who prayed before me".

Once a lady came to take prayers from him, without, wearing her Sudreh Kusti. She bragged about it to all those waiting to take nirangs. When her turn came, she narrated her tragic story and asked for the nirang. The "inner voice" told Aibaraji not to give nirang to her. When she was told that, she started crying. Then the inner voice told Nadarsha to ask the lady, if she was wearing her Sudreh/Kusti. When Nadarsha put that question to her, she was taken aback, amazed, and asked him how he had come to know about it. When Nadarsha told him that he was dictated by the inner voice, she felt ashamed and asked for forgiveness at the same time acknowledging his spiritual greatness.

One day, a Parsi gentleman came to him to sell off an old building for some reason, at the price of Rs. 3.5 Lakhs. Nadarsha gave him a nirang to pray for 40 days, to get not Rs. 3.5 lakhs, but Rs. 6.5 lakhs for the building! But the man could not believe this offer. Nadarsha further told him, "An ordinary man wearing a pyjama will come. You sell this building to him". The Parsi prayed for 40 days. On the 41st day, a man dressed in coloured pyjama, looking like a fakir, came. He asked the Parsi, "Is this building for sale?". The Parsi replied in the affirmative and asked the "fakir" what price he would give for it. "I will give Rs. 6.5 lakhs and no more." The Parsi immediately finalised the deal. The Parsi came the next day to thank Nadarsha, and bowed before him in reverence.

Once a Parsi came to him, complaining that his mind was very agitated. He wanted some prayer to calm it. The inner voice told Nadarsha to ask him, "Whom else do you worship? "He replied, "I worship all religions and keep photos of all religions" Nadarsha told him that that was very wrong. He should keep photos of his faith and recite, Avesta prayers only. Only then he will benefit. But the Parsi refused, saying that he had been doing it since long and cannot leave it.

After sometime, that Parsi passed away. Nadarsha would daily sit on the bench on the porch of the Karani Agiary after the mid-night boi. At that time, suddenly, the soul of that Parsi appeared before Nadarsha, trembling and fearful. "All my life, I worshipped all religions, but here all the doors are closed on me. Please help me. I do not know where to go now. You gave me the right advice to follow my own religion but which I did not do and am now repenting. Please do something for me, as I am very miserable", Saying that the soul vanished. Kukadaru Saheb gave Nadarsha some nirangs to pray on behalf of the soul, daily. After 15 days, again at mid-night, the Parsi's soul came before him, in a happy state. He thanked Nadarsha profusely for bringing him out of misery.

(The contents of this article are derived from the book. "Late Ervad Nadarsha Navroji Aibara Blessed by Sant Dasturji Kukadaru Saheb" by Dr. (Mrs.) Hilla Minoo Wadia).

FALSELY ACCUSED ? - REMEMBER BEHDIN HOMA BEHDIN JAMSHED.

In India, sometime around the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a "Kabiseh" (calender) controversy broke out in the Parsi community, which took a very ugly and violent turn.

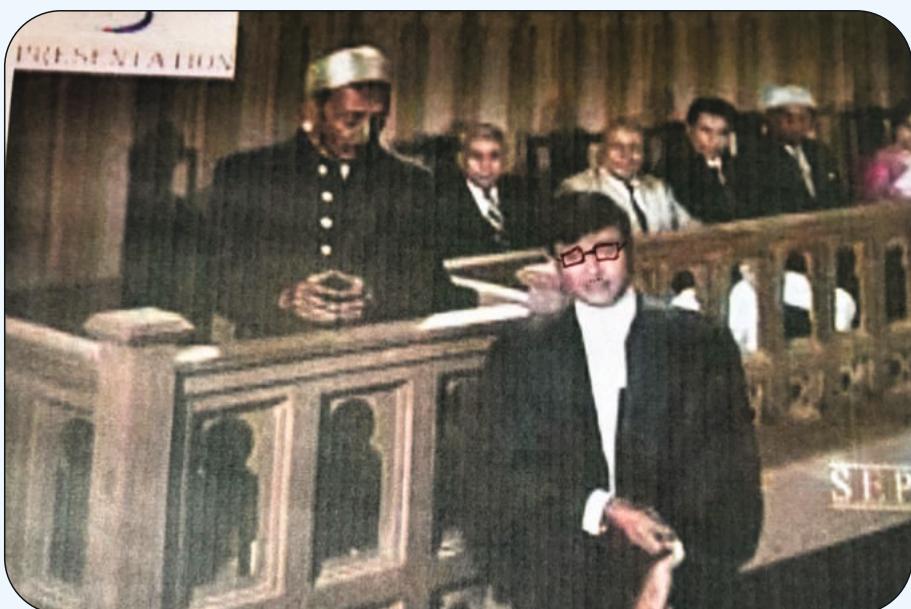
At one such meeting, a pregnant Parsi lady belonging to the Kadmi sect falsely accused a pious and innocent shehenshahi gentleman by the name, Homa for kicking her and causing her to have a miscarriage.

Homa was brought to trial before the nawab of Bharuch and then to Bombay before the British Court. Homa pleaded innocence, but a Parsi named Wadia gave false evidence against him as one of the witnesses. Homa was sentenced to death by hanging. Before he was hanged, he declared that he was innocent. He declared that the person who levelled false charge against him would be found dead on the fourth day (Chahrum) after his death. He also said that those who believed in his innocence and remembered him, would be blessed by him.

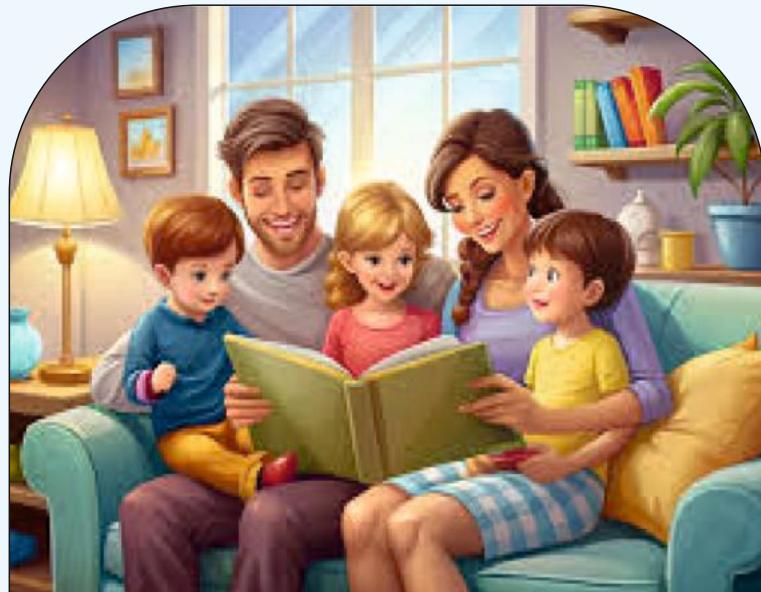
One version reports that the lady was found dead on Chahrum, whilst the other version reports, that Wadia the witness was found dead.

Thereafter people became convinced of Homaji's innocence, holiness and truth and they perform Baj, Jashan in his name on Mah Dae, Roj Govad (1783 AD) the day he was hanged to death at the corner of Bazargate, in Fort, Bombay.

To this day, Parsis, those hassled with false accusations, or with any other problem observe his death anniversary as Homajini Baj, and perform religious ceremonies in his pious memory.



MISCELLANEOUS INTERESTING



**TRUE, SHORT
PARSI STORIES**

UNJUST JUSTICE !

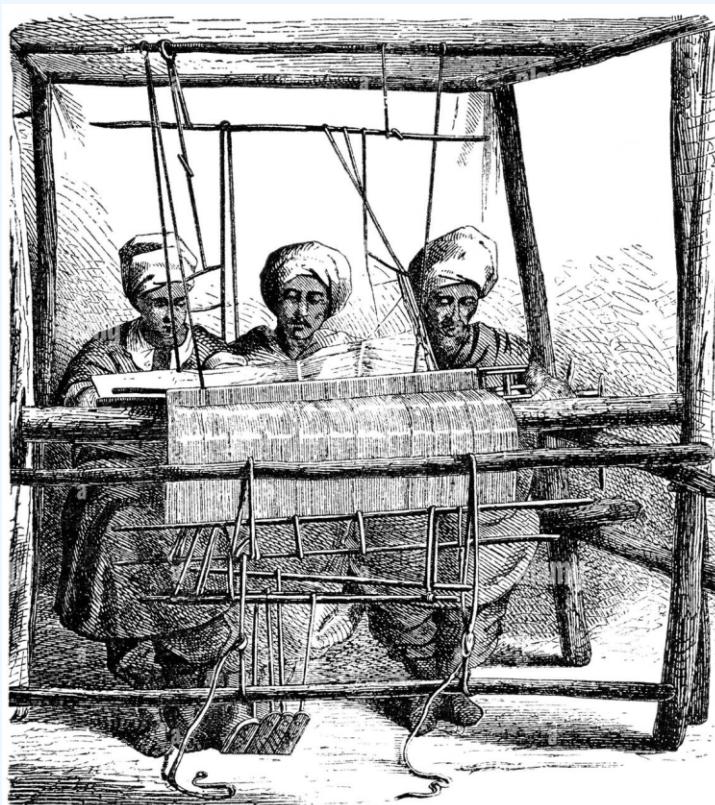
Homa Cama was a weaver in Bharuch. He had entered into partnership with a muslim. The muslim was a dishonest man who did not give Homa his due. Homa very often reminded him, but the dishonest muslim had no intention to give Homa his amount. When Homa suffered heavy losses, and it became difficult for him to run the house, he confronted the muslim, who started abusing him. Desperate Homa, angered by his reaction, retaliated by abusing him and unfortunately called him a "Kafir" (unbeliever) which a muslim considers highest insult. The muslim approached the nawab of Surat with the complaint against Homa. Homa was summoned before the nawab, where he confessed that he had called the muslim a "Kafir".

The nawab pronounced death sentence for Homa, with a rider. The nawab will spare his life if he gave up his religion and embraced Islam. Becoming a muslim would mean enjoying a life of luxury. Homa Cama spurned the offer and preferred to die a true, faithful Zoroastrian. The next day, he was hanged.

What justice! The culprit got scot-free and the innocent victim had to pay with his life.

It is thanks to devoted bravehearts like Homa Cama, that the Zoroastrian religion and community are surviving till today.

In the town of Bharuch and many other places, his name is still taken reverently in the Baj and other ceremonies, making his sacrifice immortal.



THE MYSTIC

The sun had just made its appearance on the eastern horizon which was welcomed by the chattering of the birds. The streets of the town of Surat had come to life with everyone getting busy with their daily chores.

It seemed a fine morning, but to Behram who sat at the window of his house, everything seemed bleak and miserable. Thousand thoughts passed through his mind. He loved his mother, and did not want to part from her. But at the same time, he was fed up of all the hostility, quarrels and bickerings in the family all because of him. He wanted to run away. But how? Where? What will he do? These were the questions running through the mind of an 18 year old boy, whose education was limited to 3rd or 4th standard Gujarati, who had not learnt any trade or art by which he could maintain himself. But an impelling force seemed to goad him on. Behram at last made up his mind, to go away, from his house.

This boy's full name was Behramshah Navroji Shroff who was born on August 3rd 1858, Roj Tir Mah Behman 1227 Y.Z. at Bombay.

Behramshah belonged to a wealthy Parsi family. His father was a "Sharaf" (a broker) hence the surname shroff. He was born in a priestly family, his grandfather, Ervad Peshotan being a "pucca" Yaozdathregar.

Unfortunately, Behramshah lost his father at an early age. Another great drawback in his life was that he stammered, and could not speak properly. Perhaps that was the reason he could not study beyond 4th standard.

Behramshah's mother belonged to the well-known Tarachand family of Bombay. After the demise of her husband, she shifted along with her son, Behramshah, to Surat, where her relatives resided. 18 year old Behramshah, not doing any work, but eating and loitering about, did not go down well with the relatives, because of which much unpleasantness ensued in the family. This teenager's mind was greatly in turmoil because of the constant bickerings, and one day he decided to leave the house.

One fine day, Behramshah put on one dress over another, a second gold ring over the one he already wore on his little finger, and out he went, he knew not where. He took a train to Ahmedabad, from there to Godhra. From here, he boarded Punjab Mail, which took him to Peshawar where his uncle (mother's brother) lived and had a shop.

His uncle was taken by surprise. His first thoughts were about his sister, so he dashed off a telegram to her, informing her about Behram's arrival. From day one, he also started planning and scheming to send Behram back.

From his childhood, Behram loved nature and took long walks when he was at Surat. This, he continued in Peshawar. When his uncle came to know about it, he warned Behram. "Look Behram. This is Peshawar, a frontier province, the land of Pathans, a ferocious people. Do not go to far away lonely spots, do not talk to strangers. These Pathans will rob you, kidnap you and hold you to ransom" Behram decided to follow his uncle's advice.

When evening came, his walk took him to a road named Kinari Bazar. He continued walking, till he arrived at the gates of the city called Chaman Darwaza. Forgetting his uncle's advice, he went further towards the border. After he had gone a little distance, he felt an urge to relieve himself. Having answered nature's call, he cleansed his hands with dry mud, since there was no water and performed his "Kusti" according to the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion. He finished his prayers and turned round to find himself face to face with two tall, handsome, shining men dressed in the costumes resembling mobeds. Fear gripped Behram! He remembered the words of his uncle's warning and was repenting having disobeyed them. As if reading his thoughts, the two gentlemen tried to put him at ease with their gentle and kind gaze. He started taking steps backwards, trying to run away from them. To remove any doubts from his mind, one of them started speaking in the language he could understand. "Do not be afraid of us my boy! We are your friends. We are not evil people coming to rob or harm you." These words were spoken with such kindness and affection that Behram was drawn towards them. To remove the last vestige of suspicion, they slightly unfolded their robes. Behram was astonished to see what they wore underneath - they too wore sudreh kusti, like him!.

Behram now was completely at ease knowing that they were fellow Zoroastrians! They then pointed out a "Khimeh" or tent pitched at a distance.

"In that tent is our "Aka" (chief). they continued; "He is anxious to meet you and has invited you to the tent." Behram walked with them till the tent. As he entered the tent, he was held spell bound by the spectacle that greeted him.

A group or "Anjuman" of men were seated on a carpet, spread out with dry fruits, sherbat, flowers and fruits. They were seated round "Aka" or chief who had an undescribable radiant aura. He then introduced himself as "Rashidji" in such a gentle and affectionate way, that made Behram realize, that he was in the Anjuman of noble, spiritually evolved souls. He asked him his name, about his family, about Parsis and how they practised their religion. Behram stammered badly and was not well versed with Urdu or Hindi. So he had difficulty in communicating with him. But Rashidji often prompted him and finished the sentence himself.

However, his uncle's words were still ringing in his ears, and he wanted to get out from the tent at the earliest. After a long conversation about prayers, Rashidji finally came to the point. "We have come from Iran, from Demavand Koh, to be more precise and we want you to come along with us". With doubts assailing his mind once again, he said, "I will ask my uncle and take his permission to go with you".

He was in a hurry to go back home. Rashidji gave him two bags filled with dry fruits, and instructed his men to guide Behram till Kinari Bazar. After that, Behram walked very fast to reach his uncle's home.

Behram narrated the entire incident to his uncle at the dinner table, who again warned him of the ways of the pathans and advised him not to visit that place again. Behram decided to follow his uncle's advice.

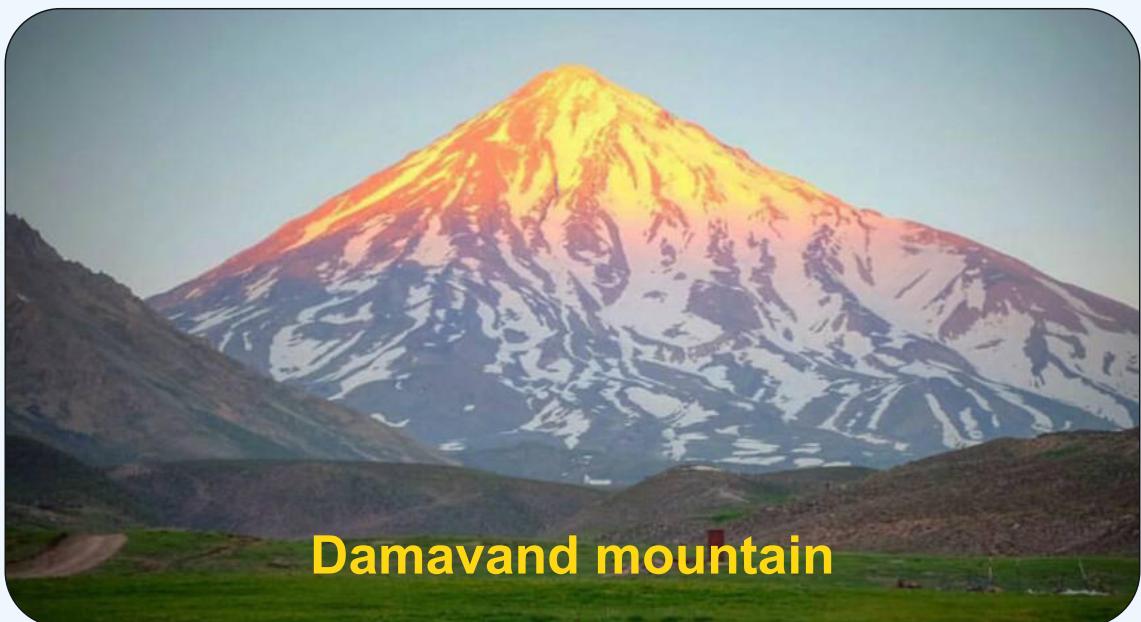
Behram's uncle, in the meanwhile hit upon a plan to send the boy back to his mother. The uncle showed Behram a telegram which stated that his mother was seriously ill and

that he should immediately leave Peshawar. He was greatly saddened and disturbed by the news but at the same time, he felt that it would serve as a good excuse not to accompany Rashidji to Iran. He went to Chaman Darwaza to convey that news to him. Rashidji realised that Behram wore a downcast look and was in no mood to talk. Rashidji asked him the reason for his depressed mood. Behram told him about the telegram. On hearing it, Rashidji closed his eyes and seemed to meditate. He opened his eyes, smiled broadly and said, "Your mother is quite alright. In fact, to-day is her birthday. In the afternoon, she had a hearty meal of "Dhandal", "dahi", and fried fish! The Telegram is just a ploy to send you back to Surat".

Behram was now all the more confused. He did not understand what step to take next. He asked Rashidji, "What am I to tell uncle? Surely he will never grant me permission to go with you. What shall I do then?".

"Go and tell him the truth, and do not worry. Your uncle will grant you permission to come with us. Of that I am sure."

After that, Rashidji gave him 2 bags full of dry fruits and sent him safely to his uncle.



Seeing the bags of dry fruits, his uncle understood where he had been, and was eager to hear his experience. He was greatly surprised that Rashidji knew of his sister's birthday and also that the telegram was fake. The uncle now realized that these were no ordinary men but highly evolved souls, from whom no harm can come to Behram. His opinion had now completely changed. Behram was now waiting for the uncle's verdict, who smiled and said", "You can go to Iran. May God protect you, wherever you may be".

Behram's joy knew no bounds, and he looked forward to the evening of the next day, to meet Rashidji.

He was welcomed happily by Rashidji, who instructed him to leave his bag of clothes behind with his uncle. He was dumbfounded to hear what Rashidji spoke next. He was informed that his mother who now knew of his stay in Peshawar had arranged to send a certain sum of money by Postal Money Order every month. Therefore Behram should take a letter to the Post master authorising him to collect the M.O. every month on his behalf, and credit the amount to his savings account till his return.

On the day of the departure, Behram arrived at the tent, leaving his clothes behind. He was asked to put on the clothes, given by Rashidji. Everyone in the tent seemed busy packing and getting ready. It was time to start the journey.

He was warned that it would be a long and arduous journey fraught with dangers from the ferocious pathans, but Behram was too excited to pay any attention to them. Soon, Peshawar and the frontiers of India faded out of sight. They halted at Kafristan, Afghanistan, Khorasan, Azerbaijan and finally approached Mt. Daemavand, in the Albourz range of mountains in Iran. Huge cavern or recess inside a mountain are well - guarded secrets, protected by talismans, and invisible to human beings. As they approached the foot of the mountain, the caravan broke off into 2 groups. One group went up the mountain, Behram knew not where. The remaining group led by Rashidji came near the walls of the mountain. Suddenly a tall, heavily-built man, a holy man appeared with some other men. The old man, stood before the wall, and to Behram's amazement, took out a big rock from the wall and set it aside. Some other rocks were also removed, and an entrance became visible now. It was high enough for a person on horseback to enter easily. They entered the tunnel and proceeded slowly as it was dark. As they proceeded further they found themselves in the light of the sun. At last, they reached a flat plateau, the land of Saheb-Dilans, i.e. spiritually advanced souls. The beauty, tranquility and magnificence of that place made Behram feel as if he was in paradise.

They were all greeted by the leader of the community, Sraoshavarez Marzbanji Saheb. All bowed before him, before going to their respective abodes.

I will skip the description of the place and people there and only proceed with the story of our hero, Behram.

There, Behram was educated in the Zoroastrian lore by a lady teacher named Tanazbanoo. This education was imparted to him in 2 ways. 1) By "Sinah-dar-sinah" (heart to heart) by which he received 1/8 knowledge. The remaining 7/8 knowledge was taught by the leader himself through "Sejda". By this method, the disciple is made to fall into a spiritual trance when he sees events of the past and future like a movie. By this method he gained knowledge of "Staat yasna" (Colour - thought - vibrations), time-reading, numerology, astrology, mind power etc.

Behram's stammer and poor memory were an impediment in his educational progress. In order to hasten his knowledge within the allotted time of 3½ years, the chieftan performed certain ceremonies which resulted in improving his speech defect by 2/3rds and endowed him with a highly retentive memory. Behram progressed rapidly after that.

Time flew fast, and now it was time for Behramshah to leave the portals of Firdaus. With a heavy heart, he left the "Paradise" and with the blessings of all, reached Peshawar safely. He collected the money from the post master and headed towards Surat.

Behram and his mother both were overjoyed to meet each other. His mother, immediately noticed the great change in her son. The irresponsible angry young man had returned as a wise and mature man. Behramshah narrated to his mother how he had received the knowledge of "Khshnoom" from the Abeds of Daemavand. He warned her, however, not to speak about it to anyone.

Behramshah remained silent for 30 long years. One Sunday, he had gone to a fire temple in Surat. In an adjoining room, young members of an association called "Bazme Ruz-e-Ahuramazda" were discussing religious matters under the guidance of Mr. Munchershah P. Kaikobad (popularly called Munchershah Master). Behramshah peeped into the room to listen to the discussions. Munchershah invited him to take a seat in the room. The topic of discussion was "Atash". After the discussion was over, Behramshah mentioned that there were several fires in nature, and named them. Wise Munchershah immediately realized that here was a man who possessed knowledge, his heart was yearning for. After initial hesitation, Behramshah revealed where he had got the knowledge from.

Munchershah introduced him to other prominent Parsis and after great efforts, somehow succeeded to persuade Behramshah to come to Bombay and place his knowledge before the community.

And thus, dawned the era of "Ilm-e-khshnoom", which means "the divine, mystical knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion which gives spiritual ecstasy to its possessor". I would personally define "Ilm-e- Khshnoom as "a more scientific explanation of the Zoroastrian religion".

A man of simple looks and dress who had nil knowledge of English or Gujarati used several words in Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazend, Persian without referring to any written notes and thus created an excellent impression on the scholars and eminent Parsis of those days.

I give here a list of a few Parsis whose lives were affected by this profound knowledge:

1. Munchershah Master, Head Master, Mission School Surat.
2. Jamshed N. Mehta, Mayor of Karachi
3. Jehangirji Vimadalal, solicitor, a prominent public figure, orator.
4. Khurshedji K. Suntoke, an eminent Advocate.
5. Ardesher Billimoria - editor "Cherag"
6. Er. Framroze Kutar Co-translator of Shahnameh in Gujarati.
7. Behram Bharucha a well-known astrologer.
8. Er. Phiroze S. Masani, Solicitor, a brilliant scholar of Oriental studies.
9. Dr. Framroze S. Chiniwalla, Ophthalmic Surgeon.
10. Jahangir Chiniwalla - Advocate

THE BRAVE PARSI SERVANTS

In those days, it was a tradition amongst rural muslims to perform some dance or entertainment during Muhurram "Taboot". The performers were called "Bhavaias". Surat and Sachin were ruled by the nawabs in those days. On one such occasion, the nawab of Sachin decided to mock at the Parsi community - more precisely, their paidast ceremony. The Parsis of Surat came to know of it. One Manchi Sheth, was the Parsi Dewan at the court of the Nawab of Surat. He requested the nawab of Surat to dissuade the nawab of Sachin from performing such an act of mockery. The bhavaias showed their reluctance to perform it, when they came to know about the reaction of the Surat Parsis. The nawab of Sachin told the bhavaias not to be afraid, and assured them of full security by performing within the fort, to which they agreed.



Manchi Sheth went home very dejected and downcast. He did not eat anything. He had two extremely mild and extremely obedient Parsi servants working at his place. They asked him the reason for his depressed mood. After great persuasion, he opened up his heart, and told them the reason, after which he went to sleep. This was the night when the act was to be performed. The servants decided that something had to be done for the sake of their dejected sheth. They finally decided to risk their lives, to save their religion from mockery. They girdled the swords of their master, and quietly went out. Taking two horses from the stable, they rode like lightning and arrived at the river bank. The fort of Sachin was on the opposite bank. Fearing backlash from Surat Parsis, full security was at every gate and corner along with torch-bearers.

Tying their horses at the banks of Surat, the two brave hearts took to the waters, swam the entire length to land at Sachin. During a short rest, both of them made plans about entering the well guarded fort. From far-off, they could see the torch-bearers standing at the entrance of the fort-they surveyed the fort from all sides. They noticed some holes in the fort wall, from where probably the city's sewerage water was once flowing. Not certain

of their fate, they hugged each other, and took to the tunnel, and came out in the fort. They overpowered the first torch-bearer and one of them, wore his clothes. Within a short time, another torch-bearer met the same fate. They stealthily made their way inwards till they arrived at the place, where the performance was to take place. The performance was about to start, and the nawab was twirling his moustache bragging that the Parsis of Surat must have gone to sleep wearing bangles. With a meaningful glance at one another, they took out their swords, and attacked as many torch-bearers as were present. The place became pitch dark and nobody could understand what was going on. People started running helter skelter. Screams and shouts filled the air. Many fell victims to their swords. One of them, attacked the bhavaias and created havoc there. With the sound of a whistle, they both left, the same way as they had entered- having attained their objective. The security guards ran near the entrance, but by that time, they were out of the tunnels and into the river waters. They took their horses and went home. They changed their clothes, cleaned their swords and went to sleep, as if nothing had happened.

The next day, the whole city was abuzz with the bravery of 2 Kavvaas (crows). An in-depth scrutiny by the nawab revealed that it was not the handiwork of Sachin Parsis, but probably was of the Surat Parsis. He sent a word to the Nawab of Surat that he was anxious to meet those Parsis. When none came forward, the nawab sent an assurance round the city, that no harm would come to their lives.

After a few days, somebody sneaked to Manchi Sheth, that those Parsis were none other than his two servants. When he went home, he fired them, and asked them the truth. With folded hands, they narrated the truth. Manchi Sheth, proudly patted their backs, and asked them not to worry. Manchi Sheth wrote a letter to the nawab of Sachin, that he had found and would send the two Parsis to his palace, provided he sent his son, as a guest to his house, as an assurance of the safety of their lives. The nawab was overanxious to meet them, and was repenting having degraded himself in the eyes of the Parsi Community. He agreed and sent his son with royal pomp to Surat. Manchi Sheth sent his two servants on the same elephant to the Nawab's Court, with royal gifts. He assured the 2 parsis that the whole community was behind them, and in case the nawab broke his promise, their children and even their entire descendants would be taken care of.

The Nawab of Sachin was extremely happy to see them and said he was proud that such courageous men lived in the city of "brother" nawab. After a royal stay, they returned with plenty of gifts to their sheth. The latter left no stone unturned to make his royal guest comfortable and upon the return of the two, sent his royal guest back, with royal splendour and gifts.

(From the book, "Parsi Virlao" by "Nahobi")

THE COMPASSIONATE PALADIN

The nawab of Surat had an elephant in the days of Manchi Ustad. Every Friday, this elephant was taken to the river for a bath. On the return journey, the elephant passed by the shop of a poor Parsi fruit-seller. Here, he would devour a whole loom of bananas without any restraint from the mahoot. The fruit seller bore this loss every week in silence, so as not to invite the wrath of the Nawab.

One day, it so happened that Manchi Ustad was sitting in the shop, when the mahoot came with the elephant, and devoured the banana loom. That day, Manchi Ustad did not say anything, but merely inquired from the fruit seller of the day when the elephant would return. Manchi Ustad took his seat on the expected day and asked the seller to rearrange the shop as a precautionary measure. In no time, the elephant arrived there, and as soon as he came to the shop, he, as usual extended his trunk to get his share of the best banana loom. As he was about to pull it, Manchi got up from his seat like a cheetah, and boxed the animal at a particular spot on his head, just once but with such might, that the elephant started seeing stars in broad daylight. He let go of the loom and groaning with pain ran away.

The next week, the mahoot tried to take him from the same road, but the animal refused to go there, having tasted the might of the Parsi's fist.

After a few days, the Nawab's procession was to pass through the streets of the city, with the Nawab sitting on the elephant's back on a palaquin. On the appointed day, the procession passed through the scheduled route, but when they came to the lane of the fruit-seller, the elephant sank down and refused to budge. He was cajoled, consoled, scolded, but to no avail. The elephant wanted to return back. When everything failed, the Nawab asked the mahoot the reason for the animal's strange behaviour. Apprehensively, the mahoot narrated the Manchi episode. The nawab sent his men to bring Manchi to him. Manchi was in his farm, when the men came. To show their importance as royal servants, maybe they talked to him rudely. Manchi gave them such a shout that they all ran away. It was left then to the Nawab's prime minister (Vazir) to persuade him to come to the court.

Manchi presented his case thus. "You are the protector and nourisher of the poor. Your elephant eats off the loom of bananas every week. No problem, if the animal eats it. But surely you must be giving your mahoot, money for his maintenance and food. Isn't it his duty then to pay for the loom of bananas?"

When I found my poor humdin incurring loss, every week, I gave him the taste of my fist just once. If I have done something wrong, I ask your pardon." The nawab expressed great pride and happiness to know that such able-bodied men lived in his kingdom. He fined the mahoot and asked him to pay that fine to the fruit seller.

(From the book "Parsi Virlao" by "Nahobi")



HONOURED BY SWAMII NARAYAN PAGHDI

Ardeshir Bahadur (Kotwal) was born in Surat in 1797. He was six and half ft. tall and had the frame of a warrior.

People on the border of Surat were passing sleepless nights because of attacks by tribals like "Bheels" and "Tawris". Even Surat was not spared from plundering at the time when Ardesir was appointed the Kotwal of Surat. The Collector's bungalow was also raided. The Collector sent for Ardesir to know what measures to take to stop the spread of this menace. Ardesir held out an assurance to check it, provided the government took full responsibility for any of the tribals killed in the encounter and also to send him immediate army help whenever asked for. The Collector immediately passed orders for the same. Ardesir started on his job, by bribing their supporters in exchange for information as to when and where the next raid was to take place. He would be accordingly present at that place and shatter their sinister plans. He was an excellent organiser and co-ordinator. To keep a constant eye on their movements he sent his men in the jungles to do scouting and reconnoitering.

One day, Ardesir bahadur was passing through the jungles with a British judge. He, at that time, had just 2 security guards with him. The judge kept wondering whether this single Parsi with just 2 security personnel was always passing through this jungle infested with Bheels, plunderers and looters. At last he could no longer contain himself and wanted the Parsi to clear his doubt. In reply, Ardesir asked one of his men to blow a whistle. In no time, well-armed soldiers came out from all sides. Before coming out from their hiding place, they in turn, blew a bugle-like instrument, which brought forth many more men all well-armed. The British judge was all awe and praise for this Parsi, and showered him with praises.

It seems there were many acts of bravery recorded in his name, and a separate book would be needed to enumerate them.

He is credited with starting the "Dandiya" system for night watch at Surat, which is practised to this day.

For his immense good work for humanity, Swami Narayan presented his Pagdi to Ardesir, which is in the possession of his family since 199 years.

(From the Book "Parsi Virlao" by "Nahobi")



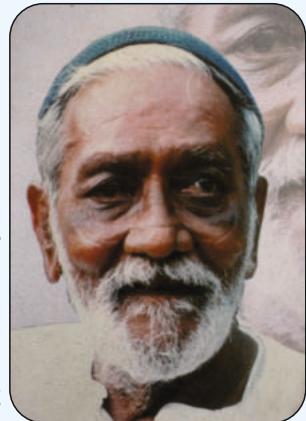
THE MASTER

Kamu Baba was a muslim saint who lived in the 1970s in Bombay. People of all faiths used to visit him for spiritual guidance.

Here, I am reproducing an anecdote from the book "The Master" (Kamu Baba) written by Bejan Desai.

"We were listening to our Master with rapt attention. He was talking to a Parsi lady who had come all the way from Indore to obtain some amulet from him.

After listening to her for some time, he said, "Why do you go running after fakirs and fake sadhus? If, as per your prophet Zoroaster's teachings, you keep full faith in Ahura Mazda and his direct representative "Atash" (fire) no evil can ever touch you".



The elderly lady, who seemed to be a rich woman, wailed, "But Baba, I know for certain that some near relation of ours has done something evil to our family. My family members fall ill every month. My husband's business is in jeopardy! I have come to you with high hopes, that you will save us from the evil doers by giving us some Taweez (amulet) or do something, by which we can free ourselves from the evil spells of our enemies".

After ignoring her babbling for quite some time, he told her to come and sit beside him. He said, "very few people come here for knowing the way, and for learning the manner of taking Lord's name. Most of those who come, want overnight miracles to happen in their lives. I can understand ignorant people asking for such favours. But you belong to the most enlightened community in India, and such foolish words don't adorn your mouth! It seems you have forgotten the greatest and the best teachings of your prophet enshrined in the triple formula Humata Hukhta Hvarashta - good thoughts good words good deeds.

The only amulet that you should utilise, is the one that is already attached to your sudreh (sacred shirt). It is the little pocket called Gireban, sewn in front of your Sudreh, in which you deposit good thoughts, words and deeds. No one can take away anybody's job, business or income until it is so willed by the Lord, for He is the bestower of daily livelihood.

My dear lady, return to your own religion and prayers. You alone will be able to solve your problems through the mighty help of your own prophet and your own scriptures.

The threshold of your fire-temple is specially designed by your pious preceptors for placing your head on it to repent and turn back from your misdeeds and thus solving your problem".

So saying, the Master got up and went into his prayer room.

It was the day of Pateti and many Parsis had come to the Master with sweets and gifts. In no time, the huge crowd gathered there, had finished partaking of the sherbet, sweets and goodies spread out on the verandah. The Master then addressed the cosmopolitan crowd thus. "Today, is pateti day of the Parsis. Patet means to go back - to repent, for any

sins committed knowingly or unknowingly in the year gone by. Spend the day in prayers. Recite in a row, at least Ashem Vohu, Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Yenghe Hatam, if you cannot recite the longer prayers. Furthermore those who do not don the Sudreh and Kusti, should start wearing them without fail from this very day.

The ancestors of the Parsis suffered untold persecution and hardship, only to preserve their religion. Do not underestimate the value of your scriptures, just because these prayers are now available at a small price in printed form!

Your faithful and extremely pious ancestors, clergy and laity alike were cruelly persecuted. Your holy fires, scriptures, sudreh-kusti were desecrated. Only to protect them, did your righteous forebearers flee from cave to cave, province to province and country to country. They moved the Pak Iranshah fire from pillar to post during times of war or danger. Everything your noble ancestors did, was aimed at only one goal - the preservation of their religion.



What price will you pay for these scriptural texts? What offering will you place before this mighty sacred fire? What efforts will you make to follow your religious precepts and practices?

The wealth of the whole world dwindles into nothingness, when you think of your ancestors' sacrifices and sufferings.

Your prophet was a Noor (light) as it is amply revealed in his name Zoroaster - "Zard" golden and "Aster" - Star. He was truly a shining golden star in the firmament of humanity.

So I beseech you Parsis, on the eve of your New Year, to adore your prophet, to walk on the path of Asha (righteousness), to wear your sudreh-kusti, to engrave your Avesta prayers on your tongue and in your memory. Do at least this much!

All these will help you, at least to keep your mental compass away from evil, and always guide you on the right path, which is the only path by which a human being can reach divinity, gradually but surely".

Do you want to know if Zarathushtra's teachings are still relevant and guide the lives of modern men?

Then read the following two short stories.

THE IMPACT (1)

Dr. Dinshaw R. Sachinvala, residing in New York, had the following experience, sometime in September 1999. His wallet was pick-pocketed. A few days later, he received the wallet by post with all its contents intact. The young boy who had flicked the wallet also enclosed a letter of extreme remorse saying he was a college student named Joseph who had this bad habit of stealing wallets, but when he saw the picture of Lord Zoroaster (in Dr. Dinshaw's wallet) with the words, Humata, Hukhta, Huvarashta, with their English translation he had a sudden change of heart and resolved there and then never to steal again.



Dr. Dinshaw, in true Zoroastrian spirit, wants to trace Joseph and help him financially so that he doesn't discontinue his education due to lack of finances.

THE IMPACT (2)

Dr. Devender Saifee has written a book "Mahamanav" in Punjabi, extolling the teachings of Zarathushtra.

What he is holding in the picture is the 8th edition of the book.

The author claims that he has received many phone calls from people, saying, they were contemplating suicide, but changed their minds after reading this book and are now leading successful lives.

He further sighted the example of a young girl from a rich family in Jalalabad who had climbed a summit to end her life. But reading this book brought about a change in her outlook to life. She later secured a scholarship of Rs. 4 crores from Harvard University, which took her on the road to success.

Her grandmother thanked the author for the book, which saved her granddaughter's life.

According to the teachings of Zarathushtra, life is a battlefield and every man has to fight like a true soldier, to establish God's Kingdom on earth!.



NOSHIRWAN

Noshirwan was the fourth and the youngest son of the Sassanian King Kobad. Kobad selected him as the heir to the throne of Iran because of his impeccable character, wisdom, maturity and bravery. He was named Kestra (Khushro) at birth but his subjects named him "Nooshin Ravan" "a sweet soul" as he was dear to them because of his able administration and sense of justice. He was also given the title of "Adel" (just). There are many stories enumerating his sense of justice. His sense of justice won him the admiration and respect not only from the people of Iran but from foreigners, sages, prophets (Prophet Mohammed), kings, commoners, friends and foes the world over.



Noshirwan

Here, we will not deal with his entire life. I will be touching upon some anecdotes from his life, some interesting and some impressive.

One night, Noshirwan had a dream, in which he saw himself enjoying a feast. He realized that a wild boar sat near him. It was trying to drink wine from Noshirwan's goblet, which surprised the king.

In the morning, he went to the court a bit upset. He called dream readers and all his courtiers and asked them the meaning of his dream. They all showed their inability to interpret it. Noshirwan sent his men all over his kingdom, to find a man who could reveal the meaning of his dream. He gave each of them a bag full of 1,000 dinars, to be gifted to that man. They all went in different directions. A leader named Azad Sarv went towards the city of Marv. He searched for his man in every nook and corner. At last he came to a

mobed who was teaching Zend Avesta to his pupils. Among his pupils was one Buzorgmeher, who was the most intelligent student.

The Vazir told the mobed the purpose of his coming. The mobed replied "That is not my job. I only apply my mind to Avesta. I am very busy. I do not have time for anything else."

Buzorgmeher overheard the conversation and told the Vazir that he was capable of solving the dream. The master shouted at him angrily saying, "Have you learnt your lesson properly? Now that you want to interpret the dream?" The vazir pacified him, saying, "May be he has innate knowledge, which books cannot teach." The master told the pupil to tell the meaning of the dream. Buzorgmeher replied." I will not tell it to anyone except the king". The vazir took him along to the king. When it was time for lunch, they decided to rest near a water body where they satiated their hunger and took rest under a shaded tree. The anxious Vazir could not get sleep.

Buzorgmeher slept, his body covered with a bedsheets from top to toe. The Vazir saw a black snake coming near him and removing the sheet from his body. Then for a long time, it sniffed the boy from head to toe, and then went up the tree. After sometime the boy got up and they proceeded to their destination. The Vazir gave a detail account of his journey to Noshirwan. Noshirwan made the boy sit beside him and explain his dream. Buzorgmeher gave the following explanation to the king. "In your harem (Zanankhana) there's a young man living, dressed in a woman's attire. Order all men to leave your palace and close its gates. Then order the ladies of the harem to parade before you". Accordingly all ladies dressed in their best attire paraded before the king. But they could not find any male amongst them. The King was very angry. Buzorgmeher said that that was impossible. That there was definitely a male amongst them. "Order your ladies to remove the veil from their faces and walk before you". This time Noshirwan could detect the man amongst them.

One of the ladies in the harem was the daughter of the minister of Chaag. She was in love with this slave before marriage and had brought him along. When Noshirwan questioned her about the man, she said, he was her half brother but the king was not convinced with the explanation and ordered that they be hanged.

The King was greatly impressed by the wisdom of Buzorgmeher and presented him with royal gifts. Buzorgmeher found a place in Noshirwan's court where Noshirwan used to hold meetings with wise men, philosophers and astronomers. Buzorgmeher was handsome, a great orator and in no time proved that he possessed wisdom beyond anyone else.

One day, when Noshirwan was busy discussing state affairs with his courtiers, he was informed that an ambassador from Hindustan had arrived with elephants and many other men, and 1,000 camels loaded with merchandise. Noshirwan welcomed him, and after completing the formalities, the ambassador read out the message from his king Ray. Along with the gifts, the Hindu king had sent a chess board, which was prepared with great labour. King Ray wanted that Noshirwan's men should solve as to how the game was to be played. If they succeeded, the king of Hindustan would continue giving tribute to the King of Iran, but if they failed to understand how the game was to be played, Ray would not only stop paying tribute to Noshirwan, but he would expect the latter to give tribute to him. Noshirwan asked for 8 days time.



Buzorgmeher



The Game of Nard (Backgammon)

The courtiers and wise men of Iran poured over it but could not make any sense out of it. Buzorgmeher came forward and requested the king to allow him to take the board to his house which was granted.

Buzorgmeher placed the board before him and concentrated on it for one full day and night. The next day, he went to the king to announce his success. The king called the Hindu ambassador and Buzorgmeher played the game before him, much to the astonishment of all present. The ambassador was perplexed but impressed. "How could a man who has never seen the board and never heard about it, play the game so perfectly"? he wondered.

Noshirwan was extremely pleased with Buzorgmeher and gave him gifts galore.

Buzorgmeher then invented the game of "Nard" (Backgammon) and took it to king Ray with the same conditions. None could solve the game. The Hindu king was greatly impressed by the wisdom of Buzorgmeher and sent him back with great honours and gifts.

Once the king went hunting and took Buzorgmeher along with him. The King got tired after hunting for long and decided to rest amongst the lush greenery. He rested his head on Buzorgmeher's lap and went to sleep. Buzorgmeher always wore a gems-laden amulet round his arm. It tore, and fell near the king's head. Just then, a black bird appeared and kept flying near the king's head. The bird dismantled the gems from the string, and swallowed all of them, after which it flew away. Buzorgmeher considered this a bad omen. When the king got up, he found Buzorgmeher downcast and in a disturbed state of mind. He took it to mean that Buzorgmeher was hungry and had not liked the king sleeping so long. He became so angry, that after their return to the palace he put him in prison. This affected his health and particularly his vision.

Some time passed when one day an ambassador of Roum (Asia Minor) came with a message from Kaiser. The latter had sent him a box with a lock on it along with other gifts and with a message that if the king or his men could tell what was in the box without opening its lock, he would continue to pay tribute to him, but if they failed, he would stop paying the tribute and neither should the king of Iran attack his country. At this time, Noshirwan realised the importance of Buzorgmeher and sent for him.

Next day, Buzorgmeher went out with a guide. As he had become almost blind, he told his guide, to tell him, whoever approached them first. The guide saw a beautiful lady walking fast and conveyed the same to Buzorgmeher. The latter wanted to know if she was married. The lady replied that she was married and was pregnant. They thanked her and went further only to be met by another woman. To the same question of the guide, the woman replied that she was married but had no children.

Just then, a third lady walked past them and to their same question, she replied that she had no husband, and had no intention of having one.

They then went to the king. Noshirwan was very upset to see that his dear vazir had gone blind and repented for his behaviour towards him. Buzorgmeher sent for the box and the ambassador. Buzorgmeher then revealed that the box contained 3 precious pearls.

One was pierced, second was half pierced and the third was perfect (unpierced). The ambassador then opened the lock with his key, and to the astonishment of the entire court, Buzorgmeher's prediction was absolutely correct. Teary-eyed Noshirwan repented for his folly and harshness and showered choicest gifts on him.

Noshirwan had built a magnificent palace in Tesaphon which is famous in history as "Taakay Kestra." Ambassadors from all over the world came to see it and found it flawless. They however found that a corner of the boundary wall was crooked. Upon being questioned, Noshirwan gave the following explanation."When the labourers started building the boundary wall, they found that an old lady's hut came within the boundary. So I sent a message to the old lady that I was willing to buy her hut at whatever price she demanded and even build a good house for her elsewhere. She replied that she was born in this hut and would like to die in the same. I let her live there. When my palace was ready, I sent her another message that the black soot from her kitchen was blackening my walls. I requested her to stop cooking. She was also assured of the best food from the king's palace. She replied that she had no intention for princely meals when thousands in the country slept hungry. She said all my life, I have eaten jowari roti (bread) and buttermilk from my hard earned money and now have no intention of enjoying free meals. Let me be here, as long as I live. When the bureaucrats of the country see that a mighty king did not lay his hands on a poor woman's hut, they will think a hundred times before usurping the property of others, and remember O king! that you and your palace will not last forever but this episode of the king and a poor old lady, will be forever written in the annals of history in golden letters. I approved of what she said, and hence you can see why the boundary is crooked".

Amirol Mumenin (Amir of Islam) was once going to Madayan for business, carrying 40 bundles of Yemen's bedsheets. He was looted just outside the city. He managed to reach the city and lodge a complaint before the king. He was given boarding and lodging, till his goods were recovered. Every day, he would visit the court to see its working. On the 40th day, when he returned to his room from the court, he found his 40 bundles, besides which, were the cut hands of the dacoits. There was a note with 40 gold coins, which read "O traveller, we have taken 40 days to catch the culprits, which means your business was affected for 40 days. So I have enclosed 40 coins - 1 coin per day. When you return to your native place do not complain of my injustice".

It is believed that Noshirwan made an ambassadorial delegation from Roman emperor Justin, wait for 10 days, as they had come during the holy days of Muktad when the king was steeped in prayers for his dear departed ancestors.

He was world famous yet so devoted and faithful to the tenets of his religion!



Taakay - Kestra Palace

KING YEZDEGARD SHERIAR

Yazdegard III was the last, unfortunate Sassanian King to sit on the throne of once prosperous Iran. Son of Shehriar and grandson of Khushro-II, he was crowned king on Roj Ashishwangh of Mah Spendarmad, on June 16, 632 A.C.

Although the king was brave, strong and noble, he had to run for his life as a fugitive for 20 long years, because Iran at that time was plagued by infighting, intrigue and lethargy. The super power, which the world looked upon with fear and awe was now disintegrating and falling to pieces. The Arabs, however, were united under one flag. Fired by religious zeal, they were eager to shed their blood in the name of Allah and their prophet. Seeing the country of Iran in complete disarray, they decided to conquer it. Such were the circumstances, when Yazdegard was crowned king, when he was only 21 yrs. of age.

Two decisive battles were fought. One in Qadisiyya (636) and one at Nihavand. (641) A strong Arab army was sent under Saaad Ibn Waqqas. The Iranian army was led by Rustom Farrokhzad. A fierce battle took place at Qadisiyya. Rustom fought bravely and inflicted heavy losses on the enemies. On the fourth day a strong sand-storm blew from the west. The Iranian army could not see anything, thus were utterly defeated. Rustom was killed. The Iranian capital was plundered and the Arabs became owners of fabulous wealth.

Yazdegard raised another army and made desperate attempts to stop the Arab advance. A fierce battle was fought at Nihavand which sealed the fate of the King. Iran passed into the hands of Caliphs. The Arabs called this victory "Fath-ul-futuh" "Victory of Victories". The famous and priceless "Kavayani" flag which was preserved and protected for thousands of years by the Iranians, fell into the hands of Arabs.



All was lost, but Yazdegard had not lost hope. He was confident that he would regain Iran, by taking help from Mahu-i-Suri of Marv, and military assistance from the Turks and Chinese. Mahu-i-Suri was the leader of the shepherds, who had impressed the king with his multi talents. Farrokhzad warned him not to put trust in a man of low breed. But Yazdegard was confident that "a man whom he had brought out of poverty, and made him a chieftan with his own army and

elephants and raised him to the court status would surely help him in his hour of need".

On receiving the news, Mahu-i-suri, sent a message to a Turk, Beezan, to come with an army to defeat the king. Surprised, Yazdegard fought very bravely, but soon realised that all the soldiers had turned their backs on him, and he was left alone. He realized that Mahu-i-suri had turned a traitor, and thought it wise to flee. Haggard, hungry and thirsty, he came to the river Zark, near which was a flour-mill. He got down from his horse and hid himself under the grass, in the mill.

When Khusro the miller, came there, he was surprised to find a man. He offered him food to eat. Yazdegard requested the miller to procure Barsam (sacred twigs) to say grace before taking his meal. The demand for Barsam aroused suspicion because only kings practised this custom. He informed Mah-i-Suri, who instigated Khusro to kill the king. He sent his soldiers with the instructions to remove his robe, crown and all valuables before they were soaked in blood. Khusro unwillingly obeyed Mahu-i-suri, who further instructed them to throw his naked body into the river.

Next morning, two men walking near the river found the naked body of the king. The monks of the Christian monastery took it out of the water and disposed it off reverently. He was murdered on the night of Mah Khordad Roj Aneran 23 Aug. 651. Mahu-i-Suri deceitfully announced that Yazdegard had appointed him as his successor. In evidence, he exhibited the crown and the signet of the monarch. He was later killed by Beezan.

In Sassanian times, a chronological era began with the day on which the King ascended the throne and the era was known after the emperor in power. Hence, the Yazdegardi era, used by Parsis to-day commenced on the day, Yazdegard ascended the throne, i.e. June 16th 632 A.C.

After the Iranians were defeated miserably, in the first battle, the Caliph wrote a letter to Yazdegard asking him and his people to embrace Islam and give up fire-worship, and the king of Iran replying that we were followers of good thoughts words and deeds, spreading love and peace everywhere. In fire worship we see the love and warmth of the Creator, the light of truth and it enlightens us to help one another. These letters are on display in a London museum. However some doubt the authenticity of the letters. Whether true or not, as S.G.W. Benjamin observed, 'In no country attacked by Islam, did they meet a resistance as obstinate and heroic as Iran. All other countries embraced Islam and gained security and honour but Yazdegard disdained such a course and struggled against his destiny to the end'. He proved to be a worthy, patriotic, heroic, undaunted and devout king, who deserves our salute!

THE STORY OF THE NATIONAL FLAG OF IRAN

The Kaveyani Zando (Flag).

The people of Iran were fed up with the tyrannical and despotic rule of their cruel king Zohak.

Fear and anger gripped the people when Zohak declared that two young men of Iran, were to be slaughtered everyday for their brains to be fed to the two serpents which had grown on his two shoulders.

Sensing the rumblings of discontent within his subjects, Zohak, circulated "Mehzarnameh" (a pledge of loyalty) in his court and asked everyone to sign it, which all the courtiers did unwillingly, out of fear of the king's reaction.

As the declaration was being signed, a well-built man stormed into the court shouting and condemning him. Zohak asked him the reason for his coming to which he replied, "I am Kaveh, a blacksmith. I had eighteen sons, but one by one all have been slaughtered to feed your serpents. To-day, my last son, the only hope and support of my old age has also been taken away by your soldiers. I have come here to take back my son".



Zohak felt that this was a good opportunity to make him sign the pledge of loyalty after acceding to his demand. He ordered the soldier to return his son to him. As the father and son were leaving the court, Zohak asked them to sign the pledge. When Kaveh read the pledge and saw the signature of the courtiers, he turned towards them seething with rage, "Oh! you cowards! Have you all turned your face away from God and towards the devil, that you have signed it?" He tore the declaration to pieces, trampled it under his feet and stormed out of the court.

Standing at the market square he called upon the Iranians to gather together to put an end to Zohak's tyrannical rule and appoint Faridun as the King of Iran.

He removed the leather apron which he wore as a blacksmith and made a banner of it by inserting a spear in it. He asked the people to gather under the banner. Faridun accepted the leather flag and decorated it with cloth and jewels and went out with this flag to defeat Zohak.

This leather apron became Iran's national flag throughout Iran's five dynasties and was called "Drafshe Kavyani" "Kavyani Zando" (the royal flag). When this flag gave victory to Faridun against Zohak, it was considered very auspicious by succeeding kings, who ornamented it with priceless gems. This flag was revered so much by the Iranians that it was protected at the cost of their lives. It went underground during the rule of Alexander in Iran. It saw the light of the sun again when Ardeshir Babakan freed Iran from the Greek rule. It was preserved with great respect till the last Iranian king, Yazdegard Shehriar. By that time, it was so loaded with precious gems, that it required several men to carry it. It was 22 ft. in length and 15 ft. in breadth. When the Arab chief Hazrat Omar was victorious in defeating the Iranian king, this auspicious flag went into the hands of the Arabs. He distributed the gems of the flag amongst his soldiers, the priceless gems making them rich beyond their dreams! The commander Sayyed Vakkas was given 30,000 gold coins as reward for capturing the flag which was impossible to capture till then, by any nation.

FIRDAUSI TOOSI

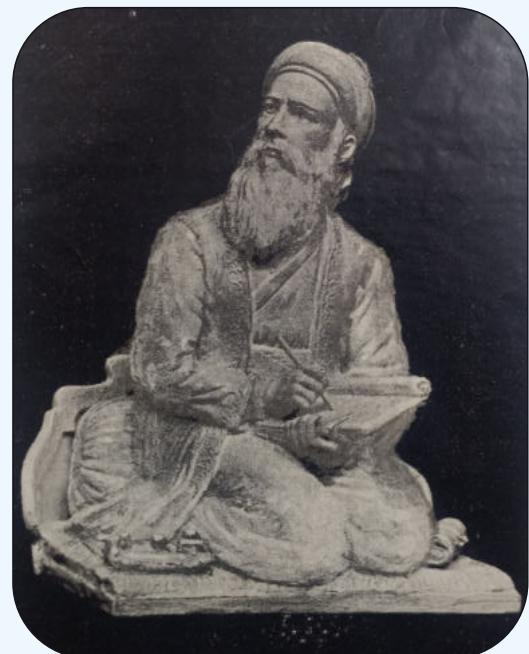
Firdausi was a muslim poet who wrote the immortal epic , “Shahnameh “ the”Book of kings”, in Persian.

Let us delve into his life as his life is as interesting as his stories.

He was born around 935 A.D. in the village Shadab in the city of Toos. His real name was Abul Quasim Hasan who took the pen-name Firdausi since his grandfather worked in a garden called Firdaus (heaven). From childhood Firdausi was greatly enamoured by the stories of great Iranian kings and heroes. He took great pains to learn the history , language and religion of ancient Iran. After great search and research he found enough material to start his colossal task. At that time Sultan Mahmud became the sultan of Gazni. As a patron of art and learning, he was very anxious to write the history of ancient Iran.

When the sultan came to know about Firdausi’s poetic prowess, he sent him a word to visit him. Firdausi set off for Gazni. The jealous court poets, Ansari and Rudaki conspired with the court clerk Badauddin and dashed a letter to Firdausi not to take the trouble of coming, as the sultan was least interested in him. On receiving the letter, Firdausi was totally confused. In the meanwhile, a grave misunderstanding took place between the poets and the clerk and another letter was sent to him asking him to proceed to Gazni.

On reaching Gazni, Firdausi decided to rest in a public garden, where by chance three court poets,, Ansari, Asjadi and Farrokhi were feasting. When they saw him approaching them, they plotted to get rid of him. They told him that he could sit with them, only if he could complete the quartet recited by them by rhyming the last word. The first poet ended the quartet with “Raushan “ the second with “ Golshan “ and the third with” Jaushan” knowing fully well that there was no other word in Persian which can rhyme with these three. But to their utter surprise and disappointment, Firdausi completed it with the rhyming word “ Pashan “ which was a proper name of a battlefield. Crestfallen, they all went away, leaving Firdausi alone. Just then, Mahak, a courtier in the court of Sultan came there and after a brief introduction took him home. He took Firdausi’s couplet to the sultan the next day. The sultan was so impressed by his poetic genius, that out of the many other poets he was selected to write the entire Shahnameh. He was promised a gold coin for every couplet that he wrote. He started his work in a special room adorned with pictures of battlefields, Paladins, weapons and armours. A trusted slave Ayaz was to look after Firdausi.



In this room, Firdausi toiled for thirty five long years to complete his masterpiece comprising sixty thousand rhyming couplets which entitled him for a reward of sixty thousand gold coins. He sent his complete work to the sultan through Ayaz. The sultan's envious minister Khwaja Hasan Maimandi instigated the sultan against giving gold coins and persuaded the sultan to give instead silver coins.

Ayaz took the bag of silver coins to Firdausi who was at that time in a public bath. Firdausi was shocked beyond words to see the silver coins and in his anger, gave away twenty thousand coins to Ayaz, twenty thousand to bath house-keeper and twenty thousand to the sherbat seller. Reinstigated by Maimandi the sultan summoned Firdausi. To save his skin, Firdausi fled Gazni. Months passed and certain circumstances made the sultan repent for his ill treatment towards Firdausi.

One day when Firdausi was walking in the bazar of Toos, he heard a small boy reciting his couplet. Listening to it Firdausi collapsed and passed away. Just then, the sultan sent sixty thousand gold coins and camel load of gifts for Firdausi. We are told, that when the camels entered the Rudbar Gate, Firdausi's dead body was carried out from the Razan Gate.

His daughter did not accept the gift but asked that they be spent to build a dam on river Toos as well as building a rest house in Toos both of them being Firdausi's wishes since childhood.

He was not spared even in his death. The maulvi refused to consign his body in a muslim cemetery, on the ground that all his life, he had been singing praises of another community (Zoroastrians). He refused to pray over his body. That night the maulvi had a dream. He saw a beautiful throne in a grand palace. Upon being asked, he was told the throne was for Firdausi. Just then Firdausi entered in a green garb. The next morning, the maulvi went to pray for his departed soul.

The Shahnameh is considered as one of the greatest masterpieces and one of the definite classics of world literature. The Parsis are greatly indebted to Firdausi, because his Shahnameh, was of great help in putting together some missing clues and for projecting the greatness and nobility of Zoroastrian kings to the world.

